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**WEEK IN REVIEW** THIS WEEK'S TOP NEWS, 5A

USA TODAY WEEKEND

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**Column: There's no 'next Indiana'**

Toppmeyer explains why Hoosiers can repeat as national football champions. **In Sports**

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Travelers can relax, take cooking classes, try cryotherapy or attend GLP-1 classes. **In Weekend Extra**

**'Unabomber' drama crosses 2 timelines**

USA TODAY gets exclusive first look at Jacob Tremblay as teen prodigy Ted Kaczynski. **In Life**

USA TODAY EXCLUSIVE

# RFK Jr. has 'Real Food' on his menu

## Cooking series aims to help Americans eat well

**Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy**
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Get ready for some sauerkraut-infused meals.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will put his cooking skills to the test with celebrity chefs to motivate Americans to eat healthy.

Kennedy has launched "The Real Food Show," a new cooking series, to help translate the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans into easy, affordable meals they can prepare at home, he said in an exclusive sit-down interview with USA TODAY.

An evangelist of fermented food who once carried a personal stash of sauerkraut to restaurants, the HHS secretary said the recipes will feature kimchi, sauerkraut and yogurt.

**Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. joins celebrity chef Andrew Gruel for an episode of "The Real Food Show."** PROVIDED BY HHS

As he prepares to try to change Americans' eating habits, Kennedy also talked about cooking with the family as an antidote to loneliness; his own eating habits ("I'll eat anything. I don't have a gag reflex"); his status as a weight loss guru among members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet; and a culinary habit his wife banned while going out to dinner.

The new dietary guidelines, unveiled in January, prioritize protein at every meal, full-fat dairy, vegetables, fruits and whole grains. The slogan "Eat Real Food" accompanying the new guidelines is an oft repeated mantra among his circle of influencers, including boxing legend Mike Tyson.

"When we published the dietary guidelines, there was immediately sort of a good reaction, but also a little trepidation from the public and from critics saying that this food is a lot more expensive than the ultra-processed food that we've been eating,"

**See FOOD, Page 3A**

**Kennedy: Cyclosporiasis outbreak 'hard to track'**

Food surveillance is better than ever, health secretary says. **3A**

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# Behind the scenes at northern border

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers Marie-Pierre Guertin, left, Samuel Perreault-Magny and Jonathan Maheu patrol a dead-end road at the border with the United States.** PHOTOS BY TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

## Canada's enforcement stands apart from U.S. approach

**Part of the remote New York-Canadian border is known as "the slash" – a 20-foot-wide corridor maintained by both countries over about 1,300 miles. Only a few signs warn against crossing illegally.**

**"You feel for these people. ... Behind our uniform and badge, we are also human."**
**Canadian Cpl. Samuel Perreault-Magny**

**Trevor Hughes**
USA TODAY

DOREA, Canada – As their eight-wheeled ATV jolted through this border community's high grass, the Mounties' radios crackled to life: A handful of migrants had snuck across the international boundary from New York, hunkering down beneath a big tree.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers strategized in French, considering their next move in their daily cat-and-mouse game in this area about a 90-minute drive southwest of Montreal. Race off to catch the migrants? Call in their colleagues to help?

After a few moments, they settled on different approach.

They waited.

"These are people who already think they are going to die. And they just want a better life. That's the hardest part, being a police officer. You feel for these people, a mother with a 10-year-old," Cpl. Samuel

**See CANADA, Page 6A**

# A love triangle? Jackie fans are all atwitter

**Longtime mates Jackie and Shadow in late 2022, well before an injured Jackie was forced out of the picture.** PROVIDED BY FRIENDS OF BIG BEAR VALLEY

## New, young female eagle preening around Shadow

**Amanda Lee Myers**
USA TODAY

Jackie, come get your man.

A young female bald eagle has been spotted perching and preening near Shadow as his longtime mate, Jackie, remains in an intensive care unit 170 miles from their home in Big Bear Valley, California. Not only is the new eagle hanging around Shadow, but the group that runs the live nest cam that made the raptors famous say they believe she was involved in a fight with Jackie immediately before her hospitalization.

Some of Jackie's longtime fans are calling the new female Jolene (after an adulterous woman made famous by Dolly Parton), and tabloids are covering the new development with the same breathlessness as a celebrity cheating scandal.

"Shadow was seen sitting on a tree perch Thursday with another female eagle while his baby mama, Jackie, is recovering in the hospital," the California Post wrote on a Facebook post promoting a story about the love triangle.

"I don't know who has got to tell her but I know no eagle named Jolene is

**See JACKIE, Page 3A**

# Fed splits, leaves interest rates unchanged

## Benchmark stands at 3.5% to 3.75% range

**Rachel Barber, Daniel de Visé and Medora Lee**
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A divided Federal Reserve stayed on the sidelines and left its key interest rate unchanged, despite President Donald Trump's calls for a cut and some predictions that policymakers would respond to elevated inflation with a hike.

The federal funds rate, a benchmark for interest rates across the country, remains at a range of 3.5% to 3.75%, as it has for the year. Tasked with delivering maximum employment and stable prices, Fed policymakers received mixed signals from economic data ahead of their July 29 meeting. After three months of surging prices and solid job growth, inflation and hiring slowed in June.

The Fed often looks through supply shocks such as oil market disruptions tied to the war against Iran that drove gas prices higher in recent months. But some analysts felt leaving rates unchanged would risk the Fed's credibility, given Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh's hard-line stance against inflation.

The Fed's statement released alongside the decision echoed the one released in June. Policymakers said economic activity is expanding at a solid pace, job gains have kept pace with the workforce, and inflation remains elevated.

"The Committee will deliver price stability," the Fed again said.

Of the Federal Open Market Committee's 12 voting members, nine voted in favor of the action. Preferring to raise the target range by a quarter-point, Cleveland Fed President Beth Hammack, Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari and Dallas Fed President Lorie Logan dissented.

Fed policymakers voted to lower the target range for the federal funds rate by a quarter-point three times late in 2025. The most recent move was in December.

At Warsh's news conference after the announcement, he echoed his comments to lawmakers in congressional testimony earlier in July, saying he did not view June's slowdown in inflation as a sign the Fed's goal to deliver price stability was accomplished.

"We understand that five-plus years of inflation above target cannot be cured in nine weeks or by a single month of modest price decreases," Warsh said. "Our credibility rests on performing our duties and delivering on our responsibilities. Americans are right to expect that, because our nation's prosperity depends on it."

He added he and his colleagues are tracking economic trends, not single reports.

Hounded by questions about how he plans to deliver on his promise of lowering inflation, Warsh said the Fed has no "magic wands."

"I hear from you what I hear more broadly from households and businesses: impatience. 'Deliver it, already,' " Warsh said. "This is not an excuse. This is a fact: This FOMC, this board has been in business for 8½ weeks. ... The impatience that household and businesses feel has been going on for 63 months."

He said the Fed has made lower inflation its expectation, the Federal Open Market Committee has taken accountability for its elevated level, and it has tools at its disposal to address it. He did not say whether policymakers would raise the benchmark interest rate.

"We are on the job. We will deliver. We are focused like a laser on making sure we can do it," Warsh said. "But the suggestion that we're going to be able to do it with our magic wands is one I want to disabuse you and everyone else of."

### Four questions considered

Committee members held a "vigorous discussion centered on four questions" in the meeting, Warsh said.

First, he said, "we talked a lot about the implications of the past five years of high inflation" on current Fed policy. Consumer prices have risen markedly over the past five years.

Second, Warsh said, committee discussed "the economic shocks of recent years," including supply chain strains, military conflict, tariffs and investments in artificial intelligence.

Third, he said, the committee considered "price increases arising from those shocks" and whether they are ephemeral or enduring: "Do these changes indicate a broader inflationary dynamic, or do we just focus on them because they are under the bright streetlight?"

Finally, the group discussed monetary policy tools and strategies at the Fed's disposal for achieving stable prices.

### Trump praises Warsh

On July 27, Trump called Warsh "fantastic." He also accused other Fed board members of being "very political."

The president praised Warsh again after learning the panel held its benchmark for interest rates steady July 29.

"Kevin's got a board. He's fantastic. He's a brilliant guy. Smart," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "I know he'd love to see lower interest rates. But he's got a board. It's a political board. And they want to keep rates up. We fight through rates."

Charlie Wise, TransUnion's senior vice president of research and consulting, said in a note to USA TODAY that current consumer credit market trends are likely to continue.

"Stable interest rates may also provide consumers with greater confidence to move forward with borrowing decisions ... that had been postponed amid uncertainty," he said.

# U.S. retaliates as Iran 'surprise attack' ends ceasefire

## 'It's our turn to hit them,' angry president says

**Francesca Chambers, Michael Collins and Michael Loria**
USA TODAY

**Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces site is damaged by strikes the PMF said were carried out by U.S. and Saudi forces, in Bartella, Iraq on July 29.** REUTERS

WASHINGTON – A pause in fighting between the United States and Iran came to a screeching halt after Tehran launched what the Trump administration is calling a "surprise attack" that American forces in the Middle East had only minutes to shoot down.

The ballistic missile assault Tuesday, July 28, threatened to reinvigorate a conflict that President Donald Trump has aimed to wind down after months of negotiations. Trump vowed the United States would "beat the (expletive) out of them," he told Fox News. The latest attacks raised fears of a wider war as Saudi Arabia joined the conflict and Iran seeks to test Trump's resolve with the midterm elections looming.

Trump's promised retaliatory strikes began at about 8 p.m. ET July 29. U.S. Central Command, the arm of the military overseeing operations in the Middle East, announced the strikes, calling them "powerful response to yesterday's attempted Iranian attacks on U.S. forces."

"We're going to be hitting them very hard because it's our turn to hit them. They know it's coming," Trump had told reporters earlier at the White House.

Central Command said Tuesday evening that it coordinated with Saudi Arabia's armed forces to jointly attack Iranian-aligned militants in Iraq responsible for drone attacks on American troops and Saudi energy infrastructure.

Iran's attacks came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Trump at the White House to discuss the war. Netanyahu was still in Washington on Wednesday and met with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth at Blair House, the guest house in the White House complex where the Israeli leader was staying.

### Will latest fighting trigger a wider conflict?

The latest round of fighting and Saudi Arabia's participation has triggered fears of a wider conflict in the Middle East.

In fact, that already has been happening, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, senior director of the Iran program at the nonpartisan research institute Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Taleblu said the Middle East has been effectively mired in a regional conflict since the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

"These are many different campaigns and many different battles," he said. "The Saudis will dip their toe in and out and other actors will dip their toe in and out. The question is, what comes next? How does that threat network respond?"

### What is Iran's objective?

The "surprise attack" should not have been a surprise, Taleblu said. The Iranian regime wants to drag the United States into a protracted war.

Iran assumes that "because America is a responsible and restrained power," it will eventually cut and run, Taleblu said. "But make no mistake, this is a regime that knows that Trump is different from any other U.S. presidents that are trying to run the clock on them. And because this president was willing to roll the dice, willing to actually pull the trigger against the Islamic Republic, they too are more willing to escalate."

### What happened to the ceasefire?

A weekslong ceasefire between the two countries fell apart in early July when the United States restarted its bombing campaign in response to Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Four Americans died in the fighting.

Twenty U.S. troop have died during the conflict to date.

Trump warned last week that further attacks on commercial vessels would be met with attacks on Iranian bridges and power plants – repeating a threat he has made and subsequently called off. The threat of force against civilian infrastructure, which experts warned could constitute a war crime, has been a go-to negotiating tactic for Trump. The sides have typically returned to talks after his threats.

### Why did Saudi Arabia join the strikes?

Saudi Arabia joined the United States in attacking fighters aligned with Iran, the Persian Gulf state's Ministry of Defense announced Wednesday, July 29. Saudi Arabia struck Iran-linked militias based in Iraq, the kingdom said.

The strikes mark the Saudis' entry into the war, in response to attacks from Iranian militants on the kingdom's oil and gas facilities.

The Saudis coordinated their strikes with Central Command, Saudi defense ministry officials said.

Central Command confirmed the coordinated attacks with Saudi jets, saying they targeted "Iran-aligned terrorists" in the eastern part of Iraq. According to military officials, the attacks came in response to Iran-directed attacks on U.S. assets in the region.

"The unwarranted attacks against U.S. forces were not successful," Central Command said in a statement.

### What will Trump do now?

Centcom said in a statement July 28 statement that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its affiliated proxies "must cease these attacks to avoid further U.S. military response."

Taleblu said Trump should not attack tunnels and bridges.

It may be more wise, Taleblu said, for the United States and its allies to strike paramilitary centers and Iranian military bases.

It also can target Iran's judiciary, which has continued to execute Iranian protesters.

"The president needs to flip the script on the Islamic Republic," he said.

Though it is crucial for Trump to respond, Taleblu said, it is also critical that he does not make a rushed decision.

"If the president slides back into the posture that existed in the spring, where there's just threats against civilian infrastructure, I think that puts him in the worst of all possible worlds."

### What happens next?

The latest rounds of fighting and Trump's tendency to make and withdraw threats suggest each side is trying to gain leverage in future talks, said Emily Harding, the National Security Council's Iran director under President George W. Bush.

"This is the way that Iran operates. This is how they like to demonstrate that they are going to squeeze every last bit of value out of a negotiation," said Harding, now director of the Intelligence, National Security and Technology program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank that analyzes defense issues.

Because Trump considers himself a master negotiator and believes he can achieve peace through strength, "he's going to try to show how strong he can be and thus win concessions," she said.

"It's also going to be sort of his default: 'I will keep hitting you until you make concessions.'"

Harding warned that the pattern of on-again, off-again fighting could continue through the fall, until after the midterm elections.

"I think come mid-November, Trump has very little incentive to hold back, and that's going to be a moment where he pushes very hard on the military front," she said.

"There's no incentive for the Iranians to cave at the moment.

"I think what this administration misjudged about them is that even the second-tier leadership and the third-tier leadership that we're stuck with now, they very much have an incentive to preserve the state and to preserve the ideological foundation."

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# Food

Continued from Page 1A

Kennedy said ahead of the show. "And that's not true."

The program, available at hhs.gov/real-food-show, will showcase how to prepare healthy meals for less than $5 a serving whenever possible, HHS said.

The first couple of episodes will feature chefs Andrew Gruel and Robert Irvine. For the first episode with Gruel, Kennedy will cook up a recipe for Crispy Salmon Cakes with Apple, White Bean & Green Salad.

Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again movement has found common ground among a bipartisan group of voters, primarily those known as MAHA Moms, with its promise to combat chronic childhood diseases by reducing environmental toxins, ultra-processed foods and "overmedicalization."

### We have 'forgotten how to cook'

Kennedy said the show can teach people it can be cheaper and healthier to cook at home.

"Fast food is not less expensive," he said. "That meal costs $12 to $14. People can eat a lot cheaper at home and a lot better food. But many Americans have forgotten how to cook. It's becoming a lost art."

**Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. unveils the department's new dietary guidelines food chart Jan. 8 in Washington.** ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Part of the job of Kennedy's Health and Human Services Department will be "reintroducing" Americans to cooking, he said.

More than half of all men and almost three-quarters of women regularly cook at home, according to a 2023 study in the peer-reviewed journal Current Developments in Nutrition from the American Society for Nutrition.

### A 'sacred ritual' to beat isolation

Kennedy said cooking is not just a way to get good nutrition but also a "sacred ritual that has been abandoned."

"We have a malaise, an epidemic of isolation in this country," he said.

Addiction, he said, is a disease of isolation and disconnection.

"And one of the ways that we can start connecting people again is through that sacred ritual of cooking again, of coming together with your family and creating something that's beautiful, that's useful, and sitting down with them and enjoying that."

### Practicing what he preaches

The HHS secretary was quick to give credit to his wife, actress Cheryl Hines, as the better cook in their household.

Kennedy said that while he cooked two "rudimentary" meals a day, his wife is a "much better cook."

When they have company or when the kids come home, Hines takes over the skillets.

"She loves cooking and she loves baking," he said. "She's a very, very good cook."

His repertoire consists of eggs, bacon, cheeseburgers and hamburgers.

"I can cook a really good omelet," Kennedy said, adding that he learned it from Chef Gruel. And then my specialty would be steaks and meat and fish."

### There is a way to eat sauerkraut

Kennedy, known to be an aficionado of fermented foods, was in the habit of taking his own sauerkraut to restaurants, he said.

"I used to carry it with me, but I got too many complaints."

Asked if the complaints came from fellow diners, Kennedy said: "My wife, mainly. It's hard to carry without spilling it. And when you spill it, it causes other problems."

He also does not make his own.

"I use store-bought sauerkraut," he said.

Then the HHS secretary described the correct way to eat it.

"The way that you're supposed to eat it is bite for bite," he said. "You take a bite of the meat, take a bite of the sauerkraut. That is kind of the prescribed, perfect way of eating it. You know, I don't do that perfectly every time that I try."

### Trump Cabinet's weight loss guru

It's not just Kennedy who is on the "meats and ferments" diet. Other followers, he said, include Vice President JD Vance, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy.

He said they had all lost weight on the diet.

How does it feel to be the Trump Cabinet weight loss guru? "A lot of pressure," he said, laughing.

### 'I will literally eat anything'

Asked about the most exotic food he has eaten, Kennedy said: "I will literally eat anything because I don't have a gag reflex."

"I love experimenting with foods. When I travel, I'll eat ... street vendors' cooking."

Though Kennedy might be a carnivore diet enthusiast, he also has experimented several times with being on a vegan diet.

But it never lasted long.

"I just had a, a craving, an atavistic craving for protein," he said.

His wife, he joked, would say he lasted all of 24 hours.

"I prepped the kitchen and did everything when I could, but I cannot last very long on it," he said. "I feel hungry all the time."

**Robert F. Kennedy Jr., secretary of Health and Human Services, defended federal food surveillance in an interview with USA TODAY.** JOSH MORGAN/USA TODAY

# RFK Jr.: Food tracking is 'better' than ever

## Amid parasite outbreak, says cuts aren't to blame

**Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy, Bart Jansen and Sara Moniuszko**
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. told USA TODAY in an exclusive interview that the surveillance of foodborne illness is "working better than it's ever worked" despite thousands becoming ill from outbreaks of explosive diarrhea.

Kennedy said outbreaks occur every summer, and federal authorities have been quick to track them.

In September 2018, which Kennedy referenced during the interview, a multistate cyclosporiasis outbreak was declared over after the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was first notified of linked cases that June. On July 13 that year, the retailer linked to the outbreak voluntarily stopped selling its salad, which was the suspected source of the illness, and a final analysis of the product was completed by the FDA on July 26.

Today, cases of cyclosporiasis, a stomach-churning parasitic infection known for causing explosive diarrhea, have now reached 45 states. Processed lettuce from Mexico has been linked to an outbreak in some of the cases.

"We have a surveillance system in place, and it's working better than it's ever worked in history," Kennedy said. He denied that personnel cuts at the CDC hurt disease surveillance.

Last year, federal health officials scaled back the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network, a program that has tracked food poisoning infections in the United States for decades. Unlike other foodborne illnesses like E. coli or salmonella, cyclosporiasis is a parasitic infection that can contaminate food and water.

The CDC said the program, known as FoodNet, would no longer be required to monitor eight of the 10 pathogens it had been tracking, including cyclospora.

The loss of that data could hinder health officials' ability to track cases, identify the source and stop further transmission, Kalmia Kniel, a professor of microbial food safety at the University of Delaware, told USA TODAY.

"We have a lot less information to work with," Kniel said. "I think we're seeing some of the effects of that now."

Cyclosporiasis is difficult to track because of its two-week incubation period, Kennedy said; in contrast, illness from giardia or cryptosporidium make people sick right away.

"A lot of times, by the time people start getting sick, the produce, the guilty produce is gone from the markets and it's very hard to track down what it was," Kennedy said.

Experts agree outbreaks connected to foodborne illnesses can be difficult to track, and the parasitic nature and long incubation period of cyclosporiasis add to the challenge.

"When you have a hard bug to figure out, like cyclospora, it takes a lot longer [to trace]. It takes a lot more time and a lot more legwork," food safety attorney Bill Marler told USA TODAY.

Marler said he expects a lengthy investigation, especially with significantly pared-down staff at the CDC and FDA thanks to budget cuts and firings.

Kennedy's comments July 29 came as Michigan health officials reported 10,077 cases of cyclosporiasis, an increase of 397 cases since their last update a day earlier. Michigan's health department has reported 160 hospitalizations through July 23, but no deaths.

An investigation by the Food and Drug Administration has linked the outbreak to iceberg lettuce served at Taco Bell restaurants sourced from privately held Taylor Farms operations in central Mexico. But authorities were still looking for other potential sources given the size of the outbreak.

The CDC has received reports of 6,707 laboratory-confirmed domestic cases of cyclosporiasis. The agency said it was aware of more than 11,500 additional cases across 45 states that are not laboratory-confirmed or require further investigation.

*Contributing: Mary Walrath-Holdridge*

# Jackie

Continued from Page 1A

about to take Jackie's spot," Jackie fan Tracey Michelle of Indiana posted on TikTok. "That is Jackie's nest and Shadow is Jackie's man."

Other bald eagle lovers take umbrage at the anthropomorphization of the wild birds. They say it's all a part of nature, and negative characterizations can be disrespectful to creatures that are just following their instincts.

Though experts say it's too early to tell if Jolene is trying to tempt Shadow to mate, the development has bald eagle lovers wondering: How long will he wait?

### Is the new female eagle really an interloper?

The female bald eagle hanging out near Jackie and Shadow's nest is a subadult believed to be about 3½ years old, according to Friends of Big Bear Valley, which has been running a nest cam livestreaming the birds of prey since 2015.

She's considered a subadult because bald eagles do not reach maturity until around 5 years old, the age when they typically begin mating and laying eggs. In some cases, eagles begin to lay eggs when they're 4, the group says.

The group believes that the same female had perched near Jackie in 2023 and that Jackie wasn't acting too territorial because it wasn't nesting season,

**A "subadult" female bald eagle has been nicknamed Jolene by longtime eagle-cam fans of Shadow and Jackie.** PROVIDED BY FRIENDS OF BIG BEAR VALLEY

according to a Facebook post July 26.

"Jackie was not concerned at all about the subadult perching with her," the post says. "In fact, she continued to preen and seemed very relaxed, though glancing over at the other eagle occasionally to keep an eye on it."

No one thought much about the subadult again until Jackie's fight and hospitalization. Friends of Big Bear Valley say she probably was one of two subadults who got into a fight with Jackie and has now been hanging around the nest. Jackie has been hospitalized ever since at the Ojai Raptor Center, where she received a "life-saving blood transfusion" and has been undergoing testing and treatment for a mysterious illness her caregivers believe preceded the fight. She remains in critical condition.

Though some have wondered if the new female is one of the offspring produced by Jackie and Shadow, Friends of Big Bear Valley believe it's unlikely because the age doesn't line up with any of the couple's young.

### Shadow, 'wild and free,' likely will do as he pleases

After the subadult was seen with Shadow in a perch on July 22, the male bird "had a lot to say" about it, Friends of Big Bear Valley posted.

The group did not elaborate until she was seen again with him over the course of several days. In another post, the group said Shadow showed some defensive behavior toward the subadult while his offspring, Sandy and Luna, were in their nest.

But Sandy and Luna haven't been seen in the area for several days, which could indicate they have "left on their life's journey," a milestone in every eagle's life that typically comes about four weeks after they fledge, the group said.

If Sandy and Luna have indeed moved on, Shadow probably will become less territorial, the group says.

Shadow "is a wild and free eagle," they said. "It is up to Shadow what direction he goes."

### Shadow is expected to stay, but nothing lasts forever

Experts agree Shadow isn't likely to be ready to move on from his life with Jackie. The pair have been together for nearly a decade and have shared eight eaglets.

"I highly doubt Shadow is going to find another mate right now because it's outside of breeding season," said Jennifer Cedarleaf, avian director at the Alaska Raptor Center, which has treated up to 150 bald eagles in one year. "But if something happens to Jackie and she doesn't show up next year, he will find another mate."

From years of observations, Friends of Big Bear Valley say Jackie's reproductive hormones usually kick in come December. Shadow "generally has a case of the December grumpies" until his hormones kick in at the end of the month or early January, they say.

Though most eagles mate for life, Jackie and Shadow already have lived through one love triangle. Jackie's first mate was known as Mr. B, and the two had two baby eagles in 2018. One of the eaglets died after a 24-hour rainstorm, but the other, named Stormy, survived and left Big Bear that summer.

Soon after, a new male came to town, chased off Mr. B and stole Jackie's heart. That interloper was Shadow.

Ever since, the couple have been through it all, from winter storms that dump many inches of snow to ravens raiding their nest and eating their eggs. They have "an incredible bond," the group says.

"But again, Shadow will do what Shadow wants to," the group reminded fans who may be bracing for potential heartbreak. "We have no say-so in the matter."

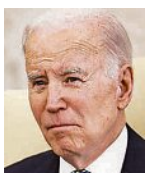
# Biden says he kept classified documents

## Transcripts, audio offer glimpse behind scenes

**Terry Collins**
USA TODAY

Joe Biden tells a ghostwriter in materials released by a conservative think tank that he kept classified information from his tenure as vice president.

Three hours of audio and 117 pages of transcripts were released by the Oversight Project, a branch of the Heritage Foundation, on July 27 after the former president dropped a lawsuit seeking to block the public release of his conversations with Mark Lewis Zwonitzer, a ghostwriter for his memoir.


**Biden**

"They didn't even know I had this," Biden told Zwonitzer during an October 2016 interview about sensitive foreign policy matters handled by the Obama administration under which Biden served two terms as vice president.

In an audio clip from 2017, Biden told Zwonitzer that he'd found 2009 documents in his house related to strategy in Afghanistan.

"I just found all the classified stuff downstairs," Biden said. "I wrote [then-President Barack Obama] a handwritten 40-page memorandum arguing against deploying additional troops to Iraq – I mean, to Afghanistan on the grounds that it wouldn't matter, that the day we left would be like the day before we arrived."

The release of the audio and transcripts came days after Biden's attorneys filed a notice of voluntary dismissal on July 24 in U.S. District Court in Washington. The public release of the material, with the potentially classified information redacted, also came more than a month after a federal judge ruled that hours of audio recordings tied to Biden's memoir could be turned over to the Heritage Foundation, rejecting his bid to block the disclosure.

U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich said in a June 20 ruling that Biden's privacy interests, while real, are outweighed by the public's interest in the materials and the government's obligation under the Freedom of Information Act to promote transparency.

The recordings stem from interviews Biden gave in 2017 to Zwonitzer for his memoir about the death of his son, Beau Biden. The Department of Justice obtained the materials during Special Counsel Robert Hur's 2023 investigation into Biden's handling of classified documents.

Hur ultimately declined to bring charges against Biden in February 2024, but said the former president had shared classified materials in the context of those conversations. Hur said he thought a jury would find Biden to be a sympathetic figure because of his age, 74 at the time, and what Hur has described as having a "poor memory."

Longtime Biden spokesman TJ Ducklo did not immediately respond to a USA TODAY request for comment but told The Associated Press that the Oversight Project's release of the materials was politically motivated.

"President Biden's conversations for a book a decade ago that discussed his late son are private, and were provided to the Department of Justice on the express condition they stay that way," Ducklo said. "Reversing course and making them public is just the latest example of this Administration weaponizing the DOJ for political retribution."

The audio also details Biden meeting with Obama and advising on whether he should run for president in 2016.

"He said it's my decision to run or not. It doesn't have to do with the field," Biden recalled.

Biden noted that Obama questioned whether he could win the Democratic nomination over Hillary Clinton, with Obama telling him that it would "really be an uphill battle."

"The fact is that he didn't think it was doable at that time, that I could, that I could actually go out and get the nomination," Biden said. "That was my read at the time."

Biden ultimately did not run for the Democratic nomination for president in 2016, deciding to hold off until 2020.

*Contributing: Anthony Thompson*

# Fauci's diary reveals insight into COVID, Trump and fame

## Immunologist pleads the Fifth before panel

**Eduardo Cuevas**
USA TODAY

Dr. Anthony Fauci's personal diary has been cited in renewed attacks against the top immunologist who became the public face of the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Obtained by subpoena, more than 1,500 pages of the 85-year-old former National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director's diary are now in the public record. It is rare for private, personal writings from former govt officials to be obtained by the government and released to the public. In this case, Fauci's diary was created and stored on government servers.

The pages, released by U.S. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, give insights into Fauci's thoughts on everything from COVID-19's origins and the ensuing public health responses to his contentious relationship with President Donald Trump and Fauci's own celebrity. Paul, who heads the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, had been investigating the origins of COVID-19, and the diaries were ultimately turned over by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert. F. Kennedy Jr.

They span in sections from 2001 to 2015, as well as from January 2020 – during the early onset of the pandemic – through December 2022. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 7 million people have died globally from COVID-19, including 1.2 million in the United States.

Here are four notable topics in Fauci's writings, with direct, unedited quotes from his diary. During a July 29 Senate hearing, Fauci repeatedly invoked his 5th Amendment constitutional right not to incriminate himself.

### Origins of COVID-19

In early 2020, his diary entries included looking into the origins of the then-novel coronavirus, including a belief held by many Republicans that the virus originated at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China, and that American funding helped lead to the virus' creation. Several studies have said available evidence suggests the virus spilled over naturally from animals to humans.

On Jan. 3, 2020, he described "unusual cases of pneumonia" in Wuhan. He entered almost daily updates on COVID-19, including case counts and entry of travelers.

In late January 2020, he described "conspiracy theories" about the virus that created the pandemic and how it was manufactured, and if that manufactured virus was released intentionally or unintentionally. He said: "I suggest that we get a larger group of qualified evolutionary biologists/virologists together under the auspices of a convening body and carefully look at this. We agreed to convene by phone the next day."

In 2021, he said he faced pressure from the right, specifically from Paul. But he said it was "molecularly impossible" that funds the United States gave to the Wuhan lab created the virus.

In August of that year, he also referenced House Republicans who continued to push the idea that a lab leak caused COVID-19, and that the National Institutes of Health had a role in it, but Fauci said it was "based on no new information or data."

He said the accusations stem from the "Big Lie" about Trump winning the 2020 election, despite his loss in the popular vote and electoral college count, and that Trump was right about China causing the virus, while Fauci helped create the virus.

"Next, discredit Fauci and it looks like trump is telling the truth," he said on Aug. 2, 2021.

"It is plain and simple a concerted effort aimed at getting trump reelected and exonerating him from any blame in the complete mess up of his response to COVID-19."

A 2022 study provided evidence that the coronavirus originated in animals at a seafood market and suggested further study. The World Health Organization issued a report in 2025 saying it had more understanding of the virus' origins, but needed more information, and China wouldn't provide it.

In 2025, the CIA said it was "more likely" the virus came from a lab than nature, though it said it had "low confidence" in its assessment.

**President Donald Trump watches as Anthony Fauci answers a question during a coronavirus briefing at the White House in 2020.** LEAH MILLIS/REUTERS

### School closures

In retrospect, weeks- or even months-long closures of schools became a flashpoint in the backlash to public health orders trying to contain the spread of COVID-19, even as officials tried to understand more about how people infect one another.

In late January 2020, Fauci wrote about Chinese officials closing schools, and he began referencing Americans needing to close schools.

On March 15, around the time cities and states began lockdown orders, Fauci brought up his conversations with former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and California Gov. Gavin Newsom about closing schools in both Democratic-controlled jurisdictions. Early in the pandemic, New York City became the nation's epicenter for the outbreak.

A day later, he said he formulated a "more aggressive mitigation" 15-day strategy that included closing schools. Later, in April, he referenced conversations with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, who wanted to keep schools open, but said DeSantis later said he was evaluating the situation.

Later, he said he clarified to Mark Meadows, the president's top aide, that he never said not to open schools, but that a vaccine should be ready when schools are reopened. Still, in early July, Fauci said, "Trump wants to open the schools at all costs. Clearly he does not care about the safety of the chidren."

In August, he acknowledged the default position should be to reopen schools because of the "psychological effects on children," as well as children depending on school breakfasts and lunches for meals.

### Trump 'a true embarrassment' and 'a very strange guy,' Fauci wrote

Fauci made several disparaging comments about Trump while he was in his first term and afterward. In different passages, Fauci said Trump was "out of control," a "true embarrassment," and "a very strange guy."

"Trump getting out of control in pushing to open up the country and get the economy back before election day," Fauci wrote on May 22, 2020.

"He is desparate," Fauci wrote, with a misspelling. "This is all about re-election."

In the summer, he wrote about his relationship with Trump, in which the president was "Okay" with Fauci, telling reporters their relationship is fine but retweeting posts attacking Fauci.

"He is a very strange guy," Fauci wrote in a July 28, 2020, diary entry.

Days before the 2020 election, Fauci said on Oct. 15: "As the election nears, the cases increase and surges are inevitable as we enter cooler weather. Trump is on the campaign trail spewing nonsense. He is really out of control. A true embarrassment."

### How did Fauci deal with fame?

Fauci served seven American presidents while heading the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, resigning in 2022 after more than four decades. Although a pillar in research, such as with HIV/AIDS, Fauci was unknown to most of the American public until he began appearing in news briefings and news network interviews.

In his diary, he highlighted several major news stories about him. His entries have become fodder for his critics about his self-promotion.

*Contributing: Joey Garrison and Erin Mansfield*

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# Week in review

*Recapping the most important and talked about news this week from around the world – ICYMI*

## NEWS

### Farewells to Lindsey Graham

Friends, family, colleagues and constituents said their goodbyes to Sen. Lindsey Graham in emotional services and with fond remembrances of his humor, magnetism and love of public debate. The South Carolina Republican, who died unexpectedly July 11 at age 71, was honored with a tribute at the Capitol Rotunda and a memorial at the Washington National Cathedral before being laid to rest at his birthplace in Pickens County, South Carolina. Graham "was a tough cookie, but he was beautiful," Trump said in his eulogy at the packed cathedral. "He was a force of nature, and I will miss him greatly."

### Idaho killer says he's innocent

Bryan Kohberger, the criminal justice grad student who pleaded guilty to the murders of four college students in Idaho in 2022 and received four life sentences, now says he's innocent. Kohberger, 31, filed what's known as a "petition for post-conviction relief" and claimed in an interview with The New York Times that he was misled into confessing. "My actual innocence is my truth," he said. Kohberger's plea had divided the victims' families because it allowed him to avoid trial and the death penalty. Responding to his new claims, one of the families called him a "mosquito you just can't seem to swat."

## MONEY

### The 'it' career: Construction

Construction is booming, if salary boosts are any indication. Workers who changed jobs in construction have outearned employees in every job sector in almost every month since August 2023, an analysis by human resources and payroll provider ADP shows. In June, pay growth year-over-year for construction job-changers was up 12.9%, indicating electricians, plumbers, carpenters and HVAC professionals are seeing their career investment pay off. Those unique skills "can be another valuable gateway to making big bucks," wrote Nela Richardson, chief economist and head of ADP research. "Specialty trades are the 'it' career of the year."

IMAGE OF THE WEEK

**Tornado destruction**

Communities in Doty Island, Wisconsin, clear the wreckage after a tornado tore through the area with winds of up to 165 mph, leaving neighborhoods in ruins.

DAN POWERS/ USA TODAY NETWORK

## LIFE

### Carly Simon, 83, has Parkinson's disease

Carly Simon, the baby boomer icon known for '70s hits like "You're So Vain," "Nobody Does It Better," "Anticipation" and "Mockingbird," is battling Parkinson's disease. The singer, 83, confirmed her illness in a statement to USA TODAY and said retreating from public view is part of how she copes with her health struggles: "If a person is allowed to hibernate during both winter and summer, then I have become an all-season bear. But I have not stopped living, and I have not stopped working." Her new album, "Comes in Waves," is out Aug. 14.

## SPORTS

### Bobblehead day suits Munetaka Murakami

Munetaka Murakami may be just a rookie, but he has already notched a career day. The Japanese-born star first baseman of the Chicago White Sox, 26, collected 6 RBIs and blasted two home runs in a 12-3 rout of the Houston Astros – all on a bobblehead giveaway day in his honor. And it didn't stop there: Murakami's parents were there to throw out the game's first pitch (a bounce from his father, Kimiya, and a perfect arc from his mother, Fumiyo). "It feels amazing," he said later through an interpreter. "Really super-excited right now."

*– Compiled by Robert Abitbol*

# Nurse survives accident and hikes 10 miles to safety

## He was impaled by trekking pole after a fall

**Anthony Thompson**
USA TODAY

**A Montana nurse was injured on a hike up Granite Peak, the state's highest mountain. He hiked down 10 miles to safety.**
PROVIDED BY WELCOMIA VIA GETTY IMAGES

A Montana nurse who survived a freak hiking accident that left him impaled by his own trekking pole relied on his medical training and determination to slog more than 10 miles to safety, according to his friend and multiple news reports.

David Cifaldi, a wound care clinic nurse and former emergency room nurse, was climbing Granite Peak, Montana's highest mountain, with two friends July 20 when he slipped on loose rocks during the ascent, according to Fox News and Montana TV station KTMF.

The fall caused one of his trekking poles to pierce through his side, leaving the pole lodged in his body. Cifaldi told KTMF the incident was "just kind of a freak thing."

After realizing what happened, Cifaldi said, his medical instincts took over. He assessed his injuries and determined the injury was serious but not immediately life-threatening.

"I think my nurse brain clicked on," Cifaldi said, according to KTMF. "As soon as I was able to self-assess and establish that this was not life-threatening right now, I was pretty convinced I was going to get off that mountain under my own power."

### Cifaldi hikes out with pole still lodged in body

According to a GoFundMe page created by Cifaldi's friend Jesse Ross, the nurse fell at an elevation of about 11,800 feet after stepping on a loose rock and dropping one of his trekking poles. The pole went through his lat muscle, with about 8 inches of space between the two wounds, Ross wrote on the fundraiser page. Cifaldi reported no major bleeding, loss of feeling or signs that a vital area had been struck.

Rather than remove the pole, Cifaldi and his friends decided he should attempt a self-rescue. The group carefully turned around and began the difficult descent with the trekking pole still extending from Cifaldi's body.

One friend used a satellite communicator to contact search and rescue while another stayed with Cifaldi and monitored his condition. Cifaldi also asked one of his friends to move ahead and warn approaching hikers so they would not unexpectedly encounter him.

After roughly 6½ hours of hiking, the group reached the trailhead. Cifaldi had traveled more than 10 miles over rugged terrain before being taken to a hospital.

### Doctors remove trekking pole after mountain rescue

Cifaldi was taken about two hours away to an emergency room in Billings, where doctors removed the pole, Ross said.

The trekking pole remained lodged in his body for eight to nine hours from the time of the fall until it was removed, Ross said. Cifaldi continues to recover at home and hopes to return to caring for patients. As of July 28, the GoFundMe for Cifaldi has raised more than $4,900 of its $8,000 goal.

Looking back on the accident, Cifaldi said, he knows the outcome could have been much worse.

"I feel very lucky," he told KTMF. "A couple inches the other way, and this would be a different story."

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# Canada

Continued from Page 1A

Perreault-Magny said. "We have a lot of sympathy. There are some criminals who are crossing, but there are some people who want to cross to get a better life. Behind our uniform and badge, we are also human."

It's a strategy far different from that commonly seen south of the Canadian border, where federal immigration authorities spurred on by President Donald Trump use aggressive tactics to intercept and detain people illegally crossing into the United States or remaining in the country without permission. U.S. agents have drawn significant criticism for their approach, including for wearing masks and fatally shooting migrants and U.S. citizen protesters.

Against that backdrop, the Mounties gave USA TODAY a rare behind-the-scenes look at how they operate. In a patrol via boat, unmarked pickups and ATV, Canada's federal officers demonstrated how they secure their southern border from the consequences of American immigration policy, permissive gun laws and demand for illegal drugs, including fentanyl.

They showed a different approach to the mostly women and children they encountered on the world's longest border: They wear ID and body cameras, but no face coverings. And migrants rarely die at their hands. Mounties in Quebec have no record of ever fatally shooting a migrant, according to a spokeswoman.

Since 2000, at least 17 people have died in Canadian immigration detention custody, most of them in provincial jails, according to the advocacy group Human Rights Watch. In contrast, at least 53 people have died in ICE custody since Trump retook the White House in January 2025, according to USA TODAY's immigration enforcement tracker.

For years, crossing the border between the two countries was a lot more casual, no passport needed. In many areas, communities were split by the border and people simply walked across without immigration checks.

Border controls tightened ahead of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, then again after 9/11 attacks in 2001. Trump clamped down further during his first term, then doubled down upon returning to office in 2025. Like their Canadian counterparts, U.S. officials monitor borders with patrol boats, vehicles and remote cameras.

"There's no wall, there's no person with a rifle in a tower, but we are here 24/7," Perreault-Magny said as his team patrolled the area.

Every day, small groups of migrants cross this remote section of the U.S.-Canadian border, moving in both directions. Smugglers move guns north and drugs in both directions. Though most migrants walk through the heavily forested area, others try to cross on boats, particularly at the border-spanning Akwesasne Mohawk Indian nation reservation.

Canadian authorities prioritize arresting the smugglers.

"Those are the ones we can send to jail or kick out of Canada," Perreault-Magny said.

Though much attention has focused on the Mexican border under Trump, the White House has also made enforcement of the Canadian border a priority. The Trump administration has complained Canada has failed to secure its side of the 5,525-mile-long border stitching across forests, mountains and the Great Lakes.

Border crossings from Canada have dropped substantially under Trump. In 2024, U.S. officials reported nearly 200,000 "encounters" at the northern border. Last year, it dropped to 85,746. Last month, U.S. officials intercepted about 5,000 people crossing illegally.

Seventy-four people were caught crossing into Canada from the United States in the first quarter of 2026, according to Canadian statistics. But the Mounties said they're now seeing an increase in people seeking refuge in Canada as Trump toughens American immigration enforcement.

**Sgt. Jonathan Maheu of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police drives an ATV along the boundary line known as "the slash" near the New York state border. The patrols are largely quiet; U.S. and Canadian authorities sometimes unofficially meet at the boundary line to chat.** PHOTOS BY TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

## Little chance of escape

The migrants gathered under the tree didn't know it, but the Mounties clocked them even before they crossed the border.

Because this border area connecting northern New York state to southern Quebec is so remote, there's little chance of migrants getting away. Only a few roads cross the area, and the Mounties recognize local farmers' vehicles. The officers also have drones and helicopters equipped to track people hiding in the dark.

Eventually, a car or a minivan will creep down the narrow dirt road, ready to collect migrants who have paid at least $1,000 for GPS coordinates and guidance on how to get across. Sometimes they call a taxi or seek guidance from locals on how to get to Montreal or even Toronto, hundreds of miles away.

That's when the Mounties waiting nearby swoop in.

## Haitian migration on the rise

Trump has placed intense focus on the U.S.-Mexican border, deploying the military, expanding his border wall and turning back most people crossing in search of asylum. And as he has toughened immigration enforcement domestically, including by ending Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of long-term residents, including Haitians who fled their homeland.

The United States and Canada have a long-standing agreement requiring people fleeing persecution to request asylum in whichever country they first set foot in. A deal between the two countries in March 2023 closed a loophole allowing people who snuck across the U.S. border into Canada to seek asylum.

**"You wish you could help them better, but that's definitely not the way we want people to enter our country. Unfortunately, even though I feel for them, we still have a job to do it, and we'll do it."**

**Cpl. Samuel Perreault-Magny**

Now, most of those caught crossing illegally into Canada are immediately sent back to the United States, where their asylum claims are typically denied under Trump administration policies.

Among the exceptions for asylum-seekers crossing from the United States is one for people who can evade capture for two weeks, which resets the asylum claim clock.

Unlike the U.S.-Mexico border, the U.S.-Canada border mostly lacks physical barriers. Instead, large portions of it run through expansive forests. In the winter, deep snow accumulates. In the summer, mosquitoes and ticks head for anyone not wearing what the Mounties call "summer perfume" – bug spray.

Mounties said they've seen an increase in the number of criminal organizations smuggling people across the border in both directions after the 2023 Canada-U.S. agreement. In some cases, migrants headed south to the United States stay in the same Montreal safe houses as people who have snuck into Canada and are waiting out the 14-day refugee period.

Perreault-Magny said he knows most of the migrants are just looking for a better life.

"You wish you could help them better, but that's definitely not the way we want people to enter our country," Perreault-Magny said. "Unfortunately, even though I feel for them, we still have a job to do it, and we'll do it – don't get me wrong."

Trump and U.S. immigration officials often describe migrants as an invading force destroying the country from within. They name and shame those being deported, in many cases forcing them to pose for pictures. In contrast, their Canadian counterparts treat each migrant with dignity, including by barring journalists from taking photos of them when they are in custody.

Perreault-Magny, a father of a toddler, said he has seen mothers carrying infants through the woods, their feet wrapped in aluminum foil to stave off the winter cold. He has followed other migrant groups through waist-deep snow for more than seven hours, worried about their safety even as he sought to arrest them.

## Human rights groups raise voices

An increasing source of tension between the United States and Canada is the treatment of people seeking asylum. Under the 2023 agreement, people who illegally cross from the United States into Canada for asylum are almost always returned, on the grounds that they will be treated equally by either country.

But Amnesty International and other human rights groups argue the United States now routinely violates the human rights of detainees under Trump's aggressive enforcement.

"Every day, people fleeing danger present themselves at the Canadian border, expressing grave fears about what will happen to them if they are returned to the U.S.," said Asma Faizi, president of the Canadian Council for Refugees.

Amnesty International and the other groups are suing on behalf of a Honduran family whose members sought asylum in Canada last year after learning the Trump administration had rejected their 2022 asylum claim in Maryland. The family – a couple and their young son – say that the Trump administration canceled their asylum claim without explanation and that to avoid being forced to return to their dangerous home country, they sought sanctuary in Canada.

Under the 2023 agreement, the family members were deported from Canada, held in a controversial family immigration detention center in Dilley, Texas, for two weeks, then deported to Honduras, where they remain in hiding.

Watching how the United States treats detainees horrifies many Canadians, said Julia Sande, an immigration attorney with Amnesty International.

"As policies change, as people are stripped of their status, as this chaos unfolds in the United States, if people no longer feel safe in the United States, of course they're going to come to Canada," Sande said.

"We hear from people concerned all the time about what is happening in the United States. They watch in horror the mass deportation and detention, the intentional cruelty and chaos."

## Border crossing can be deadly

In addition to patrolling the land border, Perreault-Magny and his colleagues monitor the St. Lawrence River, which largely forms the border between the United States and Canada in northern New York. Dotted with small islands, the area is prime territory for smugglers of drugs, guns and people.

Recently, Perreault-Magny and his colleague, Sgt. Jonathan Maheu, cruised across the water in their patrol boat at about 35 mph, slowing to inspect passing boats. People would be surprised, Maheu said, at how often smugglers load a boat with people and act as if they aren't about to cross the border.

In 2023, all four members of a Romanian family drowned when their boat sank in a winter storm in March. U.S. prosecutors said the family was being smuggled from Canada into the United States via the Akwesasne Mohawk Indian reserve. The reserve sits in both Canada and the United States, and the overlapping jurisdictions can make smuggling easier, Maheu said.

"Some places, you can toss a bag full of guns across a stream and it's over the border, or you take a 10-minute boat ride and drop off drugs," he said.

American prosecutors also target human trafficking organizations on the Canadian border. On July 20, the Justice Department announced three Mexican men pleaded guilty to smuggling hundreds of people south from Canada into New York, then transferring them to the Midwest. The smugglers sometimes recruited their clients into the network to pay off their costs, prosecutors said, or persuaded them to make testimonial videos for prospective border crossers.

U.S. prosecutors have secured multiple guilty pleas this year from people using the Akwesasne nation territory to smuggle people into the United States. A Canadian-American citizen and member of the Akwesasne nation pleaded guilty July 23 for her role in organizing the failed 2023 smuggling effort in which the Romanian family of four died.

"While most illicit flows of concern include fentanyl, firearms, human smuggling, and contraband goods, we remain vigilant against all threats to public safety and national security," the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a statement. "Our ongoing collaboration ensures both countries can respond effectively to risks and maintain the secure, efficient flow of legitimate trade and travel."

## subhead here and here

On the New York-Canadian border about an hour south of Montreal, the three patrolling Mounties checked in with headquarters as they bounced across streams, mud puddles and downed limbs. They were traveling through a section known as "the cut" or "the slash." Jointly maintained by both countries for about 1,300 miles, it's a 20-foot-wide corridor marking the boundary. Only a few signs warn against illegal border crossing, and remote cameras monitor the forest on both sides.

U.S. and Canadian authorities sometimes unofficially meet to chat across the boundary line, trading information about trends they have seen. But most of the times, the patrols are quiet. Maheu launched a drone for an aerial perspective. Earlier, the group paused to watch colleagues in a helicopter fly circles close to the border.

## 'You feel for that mom'

The Mounties were comfortable with letting the migrants remain under the tree a few miles away, knowing their colleagues were poised to arrest them.

Citing operational security, they declined to explain exactly what ultimately happened. But a few hours later, the migrants were in custody. And investigators were trying to track down the people who smuggled them in. The barracks' holding cells in Valleyfield remained empty. The three Mounties headed home to their families.

"Behind our badge and uniform, you feel for that mom that just wants to get her daughter or her boy a better life, but there is stuff in place to come in Canada the legal way," Perreault-Magny said. "Obviously, coming in the middle of the night or the middle of the day through the woods or through water is not the right way to enter a country legally."

**A stone marker delineates the boundary between the United States and Canada on the Quebec side of the crossing at Churubusco, New York. Much of the border along Quebec is so remote, there's little chance of border crossers getting away. Only a few roads cross the area, and the Mounties recognize the locals.**

# OPINION

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# 'Odyssey' enlightens our odyssey with history

**Amelia Robinson**
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

**At "The Odyssey" premiere in New York City on July 14 are, from left, actors Charlize Theron, Samantha Morton, John Leguizamo, Tom Holland, Matt Damon, Anne Hathaway, Lupita Nyong'o and Zendaya.** MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY IMAGES FOR UNIVERSAL PICTURES

My buddy Dave had a running joke during our friend group's epic four-nation odyssey from Venice to Athens over two weeks: "You've seen one dusty old rock, you've seen them all."

Funny, but, of course, not at all true.

The trip took us to palaces, ancient ruins and towns that thrived millennia before this nation was a twinkle in our Founding Fathers' eyes – or anyone could imagine being mad about who played Helen of Troy in a telling of "The Odyssey."

We were more than 5,000 miles away from home, staring at some of the dustiest and oldest "rocks" I've ever seen, on the day our nation celebrated its 250th birthday.

I was awed that day by Akrotiri of Thera (Santorini), the remains of a female-centric city founded roughly 7,000 years ago and abandoned after a volcanic eruption around 1600 BC. Ash helped preserve the frescoes, including the remarkable Akrotiri Boxing Boys, which we later saw at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

### Are we debating ancient Greeks or historical representation?

It was ironic to be in places where layers and layers of dust have been brushed away in the pursuit of understanding, considering the intellectual darkness enveloping our nation due to the push to bury the sins that still haunt us.

Racism, misogyny and other forms of intolerance are being fueled by those attempting to erase or rewrite recent history. And aside from the rich and often dismissed legacy of Indigenous people, everything about U.S. history is recent history.

As a result of the seemingly endless culture war, far too much energy is spent on the absurd in America. Lately, that includes fretting about the race and gender of actors playing the mythical characters in Christopher Nolan's new blockbuster version of "The Odyssey."

"The whole movie is a woke mess," one Instagram user wrote – mind you, before the movie was released – on a post about multiracial actress Zendaya playing Athena, instead of an actress of purely European descent.

"Guess you haven't read the book," another retorted.

In January, trillionaire Elon Musk tweeted that Nolan "lost his integrity" when he cast Lupita Nyong'o, a Black Oscar winner, as Helen of Troy. A lot of racism and counterarguments followed.

The teeth-grinding – oddly, no one is all bothered that Matt Damon (Odysseus) and Robert Pattinson (Antinous) are, demonstrably, not Greek – is not about ancient Greeks or historical representation, as has sometimes been claimed.

### Black characters existed in Greek mythology, ancient art

Nolan's film is based on an 8th or 7th century BC epic poem attributed to Homer, and written for people who traded with everyone from the Phoenicians and Egyptians to the Carthaginians and the Etruscans.

Scholars note that ancient Greeks were concerned about culture, but did not care about skin color or race the way our society, tragically, does today.

There were Black characters in Greek mythology and other ancient Greek art. Take Princess Andromeda. The legendary, beautiful mythological damsel in distress, saved by the Greek hero Perseus, was an African from Aethiopia, or Ethiopia ("land of the burnt-faced people" in ancient Greek).

Scholars say the area represented Nubia – modern-day Sudan.

In works attributed to him, Homer describes the Aithiopes as pious, blameless and favored by the gods.

Despite the predictable backlash (dare I say, "blacklash"?), Nolan's nearly three-hour saga "has surpassed $700 million at the global box office, becoming the fourth highest-grossing movie of the year after just 12 days in theaters," Variety reported July 29.

It is partly a testament to the public interest in the stories of the "old gods." No longer widely worshiped, but their legend continues.

In Athens, a dusty old rock paying tribute to Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare and an important character in "The Odyssey," looms over the city named in her honor. You can't miss the Parthenon on the Acropolis, built on the site after the Persian army burned the first one down, and still standing nearly 2,500 years later.

The sound of ongoing conservation was in the air during our visit, but the awe-inspiring wonder of the ancient world is all but free of scaffolding for the first time in decades.

We were told repeatedly how lucky we were to see the masterpiece unobstructed. We felt it.

The history and the scars it left on the monuments are on display for public discussion.

Defaced and repurposed throughout time (it was the site of a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and a mosque), the Parthenon and the history it invokes remain a symbol of Greece's resistance, pride and artistic achievement long after Christ replaced the old gods – their King Zeus included.

Most of the population of Greece is Greek Orthodox, yet the Christian conquerors now preserve and celebrate the history of their pagan ancestors.

As our tour guide proudly said, the two teen boys who climbed the Acropolis to take down the Nazi flag during World War II are still celebrated as heroes. Replanting the Greek flag over the ancient citadel was among the first things done after Athens was liberated.

### We must dig for truth, study it, debate and pass it on

In 2019, then-Athens Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis offered remarks about the importance of history during the 75th anniversary of the city's liberation.

"Above all, we must not forget. We must not forget what happened then and afterwards," Bakoyannis said, according to news reports. "We must keep in our memory the parts of our history that wanted us to become divided, separated and to turn on ourselves. ... We forgot the common enemy. Fascism, intolerance, racism and all that stems from fascism."

He was talking about Nazis, but there is a lesson there for our nation.

Not only must we not forget our past, we must also turn over every rock – dusty or not – to make sure our true history is told.

To be a society that lasts, we must dig for truth, study it, debate and pass it on.

If Europe's dusty old rocks can survive volcanoes, fires and wars to tell stories thousands of years after they were part of fully formed structures, we can confront even the murky and moldy parts of 250 years of American history honestly.

*Amelia Robinson is the opinion and community engagement editor for The Columbus Dispatch, where this column originally appeared.*

# Buc-ee's supersized stores aren't all that and a bag of jerky

**Blake Fontenay**
USA TODAY

I have a shocking announcement that may cause some loyal Buc-ee's customers to choke on their beaver nuggets:

They're just gas stations.

I realize what I'm saying is heresy to Buc-ee's backers, who'll be lining up to chew me out.

I'm aware that the Texas-based convenience store chain has 56 locations around the country, with more in the planning stages.

I'm aware that in my home state of Florida, the Buc-ee's location in Daytona Beach has been attracting more visitors than the famed Daytona International Speedway.

I'm aware that there are lots of sites on social media where people can go to rave about Buc-ee's plentiful gas pumps, clean restrooms, tasty brisket sandwiches and consumer goods, many bearing the likeness of the chain's Bucky Beaver mascot.

I'm even aware that during the World Cup, many foreign visitors went a little bonkers for Buc-ee's.

### The good

I'll concede the brisket is pretty good. For a barbecue snob who's lived much of his life in Memphis and Nashville, that's quite an admission.

And some of the highway billboards are really clever.

As for the rest of it, the hype far exceeds the reality.

Having dozens and dozens of gas pumps at each location has been touted as one of Buc-ee's strengths. Yet in all my visits to gas stations, I've never once needed more than a single pump to take care of my business.

### The bad

Buc-ee's has become so popular that there are long lines to get gas at some locations, which seems to defeat the purpose of having lots of pumps. More pumps should mean less waiting.

When I say I want to make a pit stop while traveling, I mean it in the purest NASCAR sense of the word: I want to get it over with and get back on the road as soon as possible. The sheer size and layout of Buc-ee's stores work against that goal.

One report found the average "dwell time" at a Buc-ee's store was more than 20 minutes, roughly twice the average of other popular convenience store chains. I can't imagine why people need that much time to figure out which type of fudge or jerky to buy.

Speaking of the jerky, this is another example of Buc-ee's overkill. In my experience, except in situations where strenuous outdoor activity is involved, jerky is usually consumed more out of boredom than actual hunger.

Ergo, Buc-ee's flavor offerings like Bohemian garlic and Korean barbecue seem like the answers to a question no one was really asking.

So what about the clean restrooms?

They're great, really. (Although I did find it amusing to visit one of the Buc-ee's lovers' Facebook pages recently, where a commenter stirred up a fuss for reporting that a Buc-ee's restroom she had visited was less than immaculate. Some of the responses were pretty defensive, including a couple suggesting it might have been an act of sabotage.)

**Customers are checked out during the Buc-ee's grand opening in Goodyear, Arizona, on June 22.** MARK HENLE/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC/USA TODAY NETWORK VIA REUTERS CONNECT

My question is, shouldn't we be expecting clean restrooms in all the public places we frequent? Why treat with mystique what should be considered basic customer service?

Speaking of which, the Better Business Bureau gave some Buc-ee's stores an F-rating several months ago for failing to adequately respond to customer complaints.

I know what I'm saying is hard for some people to hear. My now ex-wife is an ardent Buc-ee's fan – so much so that if she was sleeping in the car as we drove past a billboard advertising an upcoming location, I would turn down the radio and be extra quiet so I wouldn't wake her until after we had passed the exit.

(And no, that wasn't what doomed our marriage, I'm fairly certain. That was hardly the worst of my marital shortcomings.)

On a certain level, I know resistance to Buc-ee's is futile. Buc-ee's is planning a location in Fort Pierce, Florida, not far from where I used to live. While the project has generated a lot of excitement, it's also raised environmental issues and attracted urban sprawl around the development site.

### The inescapable

So I recently moved three and a half hours away to a new home near Ocala, which was once expected to get the chain's largest-ever store.

It apparently won't be, but the one that's planned isn't going to be a miniature version, either.

Buc-ee's is becoming inescapable.

Many of my friends and neighbors are no doubt in the sway of beaver fever. So I'm not going to try to steal anyone's joy. With gas prices being what they are, filling the tank can feel about as pleasant as a trip to the dentist.

If going to Buc-ee's somehow makes that experience less painful, pay your homage to the buck-toothed rodent.

Just know that as you travel America's highways, there are more interesting and more authentic places where you could be spending your time and money.

If gas stations have become a primary form of entertainment, I'm not sure what that says about our cultural future in America.

*Blake Fontenay is USA TODAY's commentary editor.*

USA TODAY

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**These deep dives will change the way you think of sharks**

Advocates hope excursions will raise awareness and prompt action to protect species. **Page 5B**

## LIFELINE

ANDREW NELLES/USA TODAY NETWORK

### THEY SAID WHAT?
**THE STARS' BEST QUOTES**

"Would never approve of my music being used in support of you or this administration." – Noah Kahan in an Instagram comment, responding to the Trump administration using his song "American Cars" in a social media post featuring President Donald Trump. The post spotlighted several images and video of the president during his visit to a General Motors facility in Milford, Michigan, on July 27. Kaelan Dorr, principal deputy communications director for the White House, responded to Kahan's criticism on X, referencing another one of the Grammy nominee's songs by writing, "Symptoms of [Trump derangement syndrome] apparently include having a northern attitude."

### IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
**WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY**

Rowling

Actor **Susan Flannery** turns 87. Singer **Lobo**, 83. Actor **Geraldine Chaplin**, 82. Actor **Michael Biehn**, 70. Actor **Dirk Blocker**, 69. Drummer **Bill Berry** (R.E.M.), 68. Businessman **Mark Cuban**, 68. Actor **Wesley Snipes**, 64. Musician **Fatboy Slim**, 63. Author **J.K. Rowling**, 61. Actor **Dean Cain**, 60. Actor **Eve Best**, 55. Singer **Zac Brown** (Zac Brown Band), 48. Actor **B.J. Novak**, 47. Actor **Rico Rodriguez**, 28.
*– USA TODAY Network*

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**Aries** (March 21-April 19). Can't find your peace and quiet? The Pisces moon gets disrupted by Uranus today. Prepare for things to feel off

**Taurus** (April 20-May 20). Social dynamics may shift suddenly today! Are your priorities or future plans on the fritz? Pause before making assumptions.

**Gemini** (May 21-June 21). External pressures can have you crawling out of your skin while the Pisces moon confronts Uranus.

**Cancer** (June 22-July 22). Keep an open mind today. Is it possible that a belief you hold could be seen in another light?

**Leo** (July 23-Aug. 22). A friend may say something that emotionally rocks you. Are you more surprised by their behavior or your reaction?

**Virgo** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Unforeseen changes can disrupt relationships. Stay open to alternative solutions while the Pisces moon battles Uranus.

**Libra** (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Following your routine can feel like pulling teeth today. Craving excitement? Allow curiosity to replace frustration.

**Scorpio** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Could spontaneity help your romantic flow? Add in the element of surprise while the Pisces moon activates Uranus.

**Sagittarius** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Are someone's actions challenging your comfort zone? Relationship dynamics get squirrely when the Pisces moon confronts Uranus.

**Capricorn** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Agenda not going according to plan? The Pisces moon triggering Uranus tests your ability to think on your feet.

**Aquarius** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Take a risk on an untested idea? Consider the possible outcomes before dismissing any.

**Pisces** (Feb. 19-March 20). Tricky emotions may have you feeling unsettled. Can you embrace the discomfort instead of pushing it away?

## STREAMING

**Jacob Tremblay plays mail bomber Ted Kaczynski as a teenage math prodigy in Netflix's true-crime drama "Unabomber."**
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PHILIPPE BOSSE/NETFLIX

# 'Unabomber' does a double take to tell a killer's story

**Brian Truitt** USA TODAY

Jacob Tremblay might not be the first guy you think of to play the Unabomber, a disheveled, middle-aged killer who baffled authorities for years before being caught. That's not the man Tremblay inhabits, however – instead he's a 16-year-old Ted Kaczynski who is just beginning to go down a very dark path.

USA TODAY has the exclusive first look at the Netflix drama "Unabomber" (streaming Sept. 25), an unconventional true-life drama told over two cross-cutting timelines. One focuses on Ted as a teenage prodigy attending Harvard in the 1950s who becomes the unwitting victim of abusive experiments by his psychology professor, Henry Murray (Russell Crowe).

The other flashes forward to the mid-1990s and centers on a team of FBI agents (including Shailene Woodley and Alexander Ludwig) hunting the elusive Unabomber that gets a significant lead in the case connected to Kaczynski's past.

Though it would have been "so interesting" to portray Ted in his older years as well, Tremblay, 19, says, "I did really enjoy playing a young Ted and an innocent take on this domestic terrorist."

"I'm playing a character who has no idea who the Unabomber is. He has no idea of the man he's going to turn into."

The film's narrative also tied into Woodley's interests. "I am always fascinated by the whys and the hows behind choices made throughout a life," says the actress, who plays FBI agent Joanne Miller. "Learning about Ted's college years juxtaposed with the investigation to find him was something I haven't seen much before in true crime."

**See UNABOMBER, Page 4B**

**Harvard psychology professor Henry Murray (Russell Crowe) recruits young Kaczynski (Tremblay) for his experiments in the Netflix drama "Unabomber."**

## MOVIE REVIEW

# Holland's Spider-Man grows up in 'New Day'



**Brian Truitt**
Columnist
USA TODAY

Tom Holland's Spider-Man has battled Thanos, gotten blipped out of existence, lost his mentor and sacrificed relationships to save the world. It's his newest adventure, though, that shows how much he's really grown up.

Holland pulls off his most emotionally gripping work ever as Peter Parker, who battles isolation and evolution as well as a powerful new foe in "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" (★★★☆; rated PG-13; in theaters July 31). If the previous Spider-outing, "No Way Home," paid homage to a deep history of the web-swinger's movies, this new film pays off story threads from the Holland era, weaves in a lot of comic-book references, plus sets up a new status quo for New York City's friendly neighborhood do-gooder.

**Peter Parker (Tom Holland) works on his supersuit in "Spider-Man: Brand New Day."** PROVIDED BY JAY MAIDMENT/SONY PICTURES

"Brand New Day" picks up the story thread that ended "No Way Home," where Peter makes the hard choice and asked Doctor Strange to cast a magic spell that makes everyone forget his existence, including girlfriend MJ (Zendaya) and Ned (Jacob Batalon), to prevent a multiverse catastrophe. Some years have passed and Spidey's on a roll, beating down pesky baddies including Scorpion (Michael Mando) and reducing the Big Apple's crime rate by a lot.

Peter, however, is lonely and struggling. Via social media, he has watched his former pals attend M.I.T. and go on living their lives, and he hopes that getting close to them again will bring back their memories. Yet that's not the only thing weighing down our hero. He's recruited by Bill Metzger (Tramell Tillman), director of Damage Control, to help the government agency tasked to clean up superhero dealings figure out the mystery villain who has been attacking them. And Peter's body also is doing some weird stuff, with his superpowers veering out of control as the arachnid DNA begins to take over.

"Brand New Day" is a heavier Spider-Man movie than the previous rousing entries. But the meatier story, with its dark themes balanced by a great sense of humor, befits a hero who has been saving the day since he was a teenager and is now dealing with more adult problems.

And they are plentiful: Director Destin Daniel Cretton, a Marvel regular who has headed up "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" as well as the TV series "Wonder Man," juggles a slew of subplots that do wind up coming together in a satisfying way. He also weaves in some intriguing body horror plus elements of possession films as Spider-Man's latest menace hops among people and takes them over to confound Peter while also serving their own nefarious agenda.

In previous films, Holland brought a youthful, lively spirit to the Marvel Cinematic Universe as its resident Spidey.

**See SPIDER-MAN, Page 4B**

STREAMING

# Kohlberger filing adds to angst in 'Idaho'

**Kalia Richardson**
USA TODAY

When Bryan Kohberger pleaded guilty in July 2025 to the murder of four University of Idaho students, the victims' family members had different reactions.

Kohberger's guilty plea involving the fatal stabbing of Kaylee Goncalves, 21; Madison "Maddie" Mogen, 21; Xana Kernodle, 20; and Ethan Chapin, 20, meant no high-profile trial and no death penalty. On the day of sentencing, the Chapins spent the day on the lake, while the Goncalveses addressed Kohberger with pointed impact statements.

"Sit up straight when I talk to you," Alivea Goncalves, Kaylee's sister, told him from the courtroom. "I won't offer you tears. I won't offer you trembling. Disappointments like you thrive on pain, on fear, and on the illusion of power. And I won't feed your beast. You didn't win; you just exposed yourself as the coward you are. You're a delusional, pathetic loser."

As the victims' families begin to look ahead, Kohberger, who is serving four consecutive life sentences, resurfaced the case. He filed a petition on July 27, seeking to challenge his guilty plea and conviction, with claims that he is innocent and was coerced into confessing to the quadruple killings.

His petition lands ahead of the Netflix documentary, "The Idaho Murders: College Nightmare," which details the night of the quadruple murder through the perspectives of prosecutors, family and friends. The three-part docuseries (streaming now on Netflix) marks the third large-scale documentary project to address the killings, following Peacock's "The Idaho Student Murders" and Amazon Prime's "One Night in Idaho: The College Murders," both released in July 2025.

"The Idaho Murders" aims to contextualize the murders that ricocheted across nationwide headlines and the weeks-long efforts to pinpoint a suspect. Even as Kohberger was convicted and sentenced, victims' loved ones and followers of the case longed to identify a motive.

Here is what we know about the victims, the fateful night in November 2022 and Kohberger's petition to take back his guilty plea.

**Steve and Kristi Goncalves, parents of Kaylee Goncalves, are featured in "The Idaho Murders: College Nightmare."** PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

**Bryan Kohberger, 30, at his sentencing hearing in Boise, Idaho, on July 23, 2025. He was convicted in the 2022 stabbing deaths of four Idaho college students. On July 27, he filed a petition to challenge his guilty plea.** PROVIDED BY KYLE GREEN/VIA REUTERS

**Alivea Goncalves, Kaylee Goncalves' sister, appears in the documentary.** PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

### Who are the victims?

Madison "Maddie" Mogen was a marketing senior at the University of Idaho, from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Hunter Johnson, a friend of the victims, previously told USA TODAY that Mogen was "super caring and outgoing."

Kaylee Goncalves, a general studies senior, had a sister-like friendship with Mogen. Goncalves, from Rathdrum, Idaho, had planned to work for an out-of-state marketing firm after college.

Xana Kernodle, a former marketing major, moved into the apartment as a junior and dated Ethan Chapin, a freshman recreation, sport and tourism management student, from Conway, Washington.

"Ethan was a big teddy bear," Peter Elgorriaga, a friend, said in the documentary. "You could never be upset around him."

The four victims lived in the off-campus Moscow, Idaho, home with roommates Bethany Funke and Dylan Mortensen. The three-story house was demolished in December 2023, receiving mixed reactions from the families.

### How did it happen?

On the morning of Nov. 13, 2022, Mogen and Goncalves were in a bed together on the third floor when the two were stabbed, according to Ed Jacobson, a former FBI special agent featured in the docuseries. Then, Kernodle and boyfriend Chapin, in the second-floor bedroom, were fatally stabbed. Jacobson mentioned Kernodle was covered with defensive wounds in the docuseries.

"She had over 50 stab wounds on her," Jacobson said, referring to Kernodle. "She put up a fight."

Roommates Funke and Mortensen were on the first floor and didn't report the incident until later that day, unaware of the fatal crimes. After weeks of questioning suspects, including Goncalves' ex-boyfriend Jack DuCoeur, law enforcement arrested Kohberger on Dec. 30, 2022, at his family home in Pennsylvania.

### What evidence did they find?

Law enforcement officials found DNA evidence on a Ka-Bar knife sheath, next to two of the victim's bodies. Kohberger purchased the knife and the sheath on Amazon months before.

Authorities also said they identified a white Hyundai Elantra that had entered the crime scene four times between 3:40 a.m. and 4:06 a.m., according to surveillance cameras, before reversing and speeding out of the Moscow neighborhood at 4:20 a.m. Officials traced his cell phone data, reporting that his phone went dark during the hours of the crime, and then reconnected to cellular towers after the fatal incident.

Kohberger snapped a thumbs-up selfie after the incident, according to Heather Barnhart, a digital forensic expert.

### Who is Bryan Kohberger?

Although he has a limited online presence, Kohberger wrote online as a teen and claimed to have "no emotion" and felt suicidal. He dealt with a heroin addiction, friends said, and went to rehab from 2013 to 2014. Becoming fixated on serial killers, he earned a master's degree at De Salles University in criminology and began a Ph.D. program studying criminal justice and criminology at Washington State University.

Police records detail that Kohberger had incidents with faculty and allegedly intimidated classmates, particularly female students.

"People who brutalize women the way Kohberger did," Lilly Karaban said in the documentary, recalling sitting next to him in a criminology class. "[They] dislike them, find them threatening. So, they take all that anger out on them."

After feuding with a professor, the university terminated Kohberger's teaching assistant role in December 2022.

### Where is Bryan Kohberger now?

Authorities arrested Kohberger on Dec. 30, 2022. He struck a guilty plea deal weeks ahead of his murder trial in August 2025. Although Kohberger admitted to the stabbings of the four victims, he never had to verbalize a motive, frustrating family and friends of the victims.

"It's day care," Steve Goncalves, Kaylee's dad, said in a news conference outside the courthouse doors. "Prison is day care, people."

Kohberger is serving four consecutive life sentences and a 10-year sentence for a burglary. The former criminology student filed a petition on July 27 seeking to challenge his guilty plea and conviction. The petition was "for post-conviction relief," and he'll be representing himself in the Ada County District Court in Idaho. The petition permits defendants to challenge convictions after sentencing for reasons such as ineffective assistance of counsel, alleged constitutional errors and legal errors.

Kohberger called investigators' findings a "work of fiction," adding that its "faulty premises were never challenged at trial," in a statement to The New York Times. "My actual innocence is my truth, and the plea, hinged on by false promises and blatant disinformation, MUST be withdrawn," Kohberger said.

Kohberger declined to provide evidence of his innocence or provide context into his guilty plea woes, according to the Times.

In the wake of his filing, Idaho Attorney General Raul Labrador shared condolences with the victims' families. And the Goncalves family criticized Kohberger and his petition in a social media post, calling him a "mosquito you just can't seem to swat."

"The real issue is that if as much energy was put into honoring the victims in this case as trying to set a guilty man free, there would be statutes (sic) of the victims on every corner," the Goncalves family said in a July 27 Facebook post. "Regardless of how this turns out, our family is 100% ready. An actual trial this time? Let's go!"

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MOVIES NEWS & VIEWS

# Controversy over Nyong'o as Helen misses the point

**Patrick Ryan**
USA TODAY

*Spoiler alert! We're discussing important details about the plot of "The Odyssey" (in theaters now). Stop reading if you haven't seen it yet and don't want to know what happens.*

If you're casting a face that could launch a thousand ships, you can't go wrong with Lupita Nyong'o.

The Oscar winner appears in dual roles in Christopher Nolan's three-hour epic "The Odyssey," playing Helen of Troy, the world's most gorgeous woman, and her twin sister, Clytemnestra.

There's no arguing that Nyong'o is impossibly stunning: Not only has she been a Lancôme and Chanel ambassador, but she also was name-checked for her beauty in the Beyoncé song "Brown Skin Girl." And yet, her casting as a literal demigoddess sparked outcry from a racist throng on social media.

Here's what Homer has to say about the character – and why Nolan's casting of Nyong'o is so genius:

**Lupita Nyong'o, at the Paris premiere of "The Odyssey" on July 8, plays dual roles.** AURORE MARECHAL/GETTY IMAGES

### How does Homer describe Helen of Troy?

Helen is the daughter of Spartan queen Leda, who was seduced by Zeus after he transformed into a swan. As a result, Helen hatched from an egg. (Yes, we're serious.)

She went on to marry Menelaus (played in the movie by Jon Bernthal), king of Sparta, but was later (contentiously) abducted by Trojan prince Paris, which sparked the Trojan War. Agamemnon (Benny Safdie), Menelaus' brother and Clytemnestra's husband, helped seize the city of Troy and return Helen home.

In the poem "The Odyssey," the character is described as "Helen of the lovely hair," while in "The Iliad," Homer says she is both "Helen, queen among women" and "white-armed Helen." But in Homeric Greek, "white-armed" does not necessarily mean one has pale skin. Instead, it's meant to suggest that someone is upper-class and high-status, never having spent time outdoors performing manual labor.

Despite these vague descriptions, Helen has almost exclusively been portrayed as Caucasian in art, TV and film. In the 2003 miniseries "Helen of Troy" and 2004's "Troy," the character is depicted with fair skin and golden blond hair (Sienna Guillory and Diane Kruger, respectively). In the 1967 horror drama "Doctor Faustus," meanwhile, Elizabeth Taylor dons her signature raven hair and dark cat-eye liner as Helen.

### Nyong'o was the only actor who could play Helen of Troy

Whether she's dazzling on a red carpet, or lighting up the big screen in films such as "Black Panther" and "12 Years a Slave," Nyong'o, 43, always has carried herself with an intelligence and poise befitting Greek royalty. With her breathtaking work in "Us" and "A Quiet Place: Day One," she has continually proven herself as one of the greatest actresses of her generation.

And although she has very little screen time in "The Odyssey," Nolan is interested in Helen of Troy as more than a mere figure. In one of his key changes to the story, Nolan gives Helen a giant scar across her face, which is never explained but lightly joked about by Menelaus.

Through the characters of Odysseus (Matt Damon), Sinon (Elliot Page) and Athena (Zendaya), the filmmaker thoughtfully explores the casualties of violence and its far-reaching consequences. By giving Helen a conspicuous scar, Nolan shows that even the most coveted woman on the planet is not immune to mankind's brutality.

Helen and Clytemnestra are half-sisters in Greek mythology, but Nolan makes them identical twins. It's a powerful tweak, meaning Helen's beauty is still exceptional but also not entirely unique: Was it really worth massacring thousands for this one person?

Beyond her obvious allure, Nyong'o is able to communicate the quiet pain and shattering realities of both Helen and Clytemnestra, which is precisely why Nolan was so perceptive in casting her.

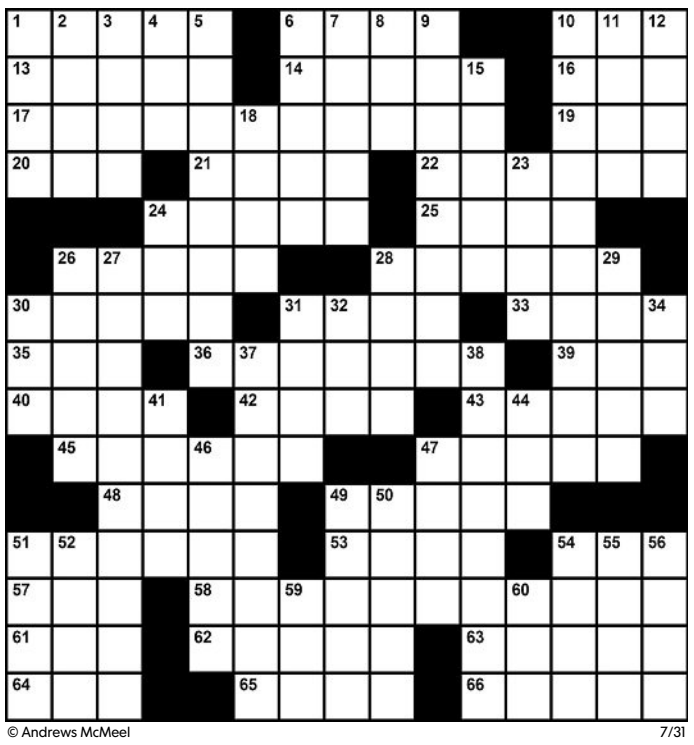
"I don't think there's anyone else in the world who could play that part," Bernthal told USA TODAY. "We think of Helen of Troy and her beauty, but it's about the inner life and how rich that is. She's able to bring the awkwardness and shame and betrayal and survivor's guilt and remorse and everything. We're dealing with the repercussions of war, which is what Chris was really trying to get at.

"To be able to bring in an actor like Lupita, who can convey so much with just a look – you really felt it in her," Bernthal adds. "I'm so grateful it was her."

## USA TODAY CROSSWORD

**EDITED** Amanda Rafkin
**BY** David Steinberg

### BRAND NEW DAY



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**ACROSS**
1 Least optimal
6 Picked from a deck
10 "ARIRANG" K-pop band
13 "If only . . ."
14 Country singer LeAnn
16 Period of history
17 Grown-up who might cosplay as Minnie Mouse
19 Floral necklace
20 Reaction to a spider
21 "We're in the ___ boat"
22 Hung loosely
24 Geographic book
25 ___ table (in-flight surface)
26 Shoot a goal, at the World Cup
28 The "NK" of DINK
30 Chinos' color
31 Poke
33 Incline at a skate park
35 Particle such as Na+
36 Toy that's nearly a homophone of a philosopher
39 Formerly named
40 "Sweeney ___"
42 Lambs' moms
43 Award for "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse"
45 Iraqi's neighbor
47 "None of the above" option
48 Prepares to sling a web
49 Severe
51 Jewish skullcap
53 Help with a crime
54 Bar bill
57 Tiny demon
58 2011 hit for The Wanted about a guy who's happy a girl showed up at a party
61 Small, in a rapper's name
62 Merits
63 Certain emojis
64 ___ of a kind
65 Moistens
66 Back's opposite

**DOWN**
1 World ___ Web
2 Injury, to a toddler
3 Jeopardize
4 ID of the format 123-45-6789
5 Main drag in Las Vegas
6 Reality TV staple
7 Web Slingers: A Spider-Man Adventure and others
8 Down Under bird
9 Prosperous
10 Performance involving the torso
11 Palm, pine or poplar
12 Uttered
15 Bird associated with birth
18 College whose current mascot is the bulldog Handsome Dan XIX
23 Dragon's home
24 Totally fine
26 Waves away
27 Fruit with a sugary coating
28 Nonverbal greetings
29 Makeup smudge
30 Makeup set
31 Least valuable chess piece
32 Pastrami sandwich bread
34 For each
37 On-line regulation?
38 Donna Summer hit with the lyric "Gotta have love tonight"
41 Start to melt, like ice cream
44 "You're interrupting the movie"
46 Still picture
47 Cookie brand that collab-orated with Marvel
49 "I ___ considered that"
50 Chasm
51 1,000 grams, for short
52 Hacker's cry of success
54 Mexican street food
55 End of a prayer
56 Most optimal
59 "___ we there yet?"
60 Game of Life vehicle

**Thursday's Answer**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | T | A | R | | A | S | C | O | T | | A | F | R | O |
| P | A | G | E | | S | H | O | N | E | | C | R | U | D |
| E | X | E | C | | S | A | L | M | A | | C | U | E | D |
| W | I | D | E | | E | L | D | E | R | | R | I | D | S |
| | | I | N | A | S | E | C | | | O | U | T | | |
| W | A | F | T | S | | | O | L | I | V | E | O | I | L |
| A | R | F | | S | I | A | M | E | S | E | | F | D | A |
| V | I | E | | N | O | T | F | A | I | R | | T | L | C |
| E | A | R | L | | N | E | O | N | S | | T | H | E | Y |
| | | E | A | T | | I | R | S | | D | O | E | | |
| H | I | N | T | H | I | N | T | | V | I | O | L | E | T |
| T | I | C | T | A | C | | | R | E | S | T | O | R | E |
| T | R | E | E | T | O | P | | A | N | C | H | O | R | S |
| P | C | S | | I | N | A | | M | O | O | | M | S | T |
| | | | | S | S | N | | S | M | S | | | | |

7/30

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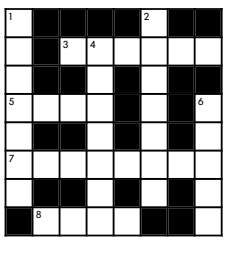
### TXTPERT



7/31

Across
3. 429244
5. 4692
7. 65524662
8. 8824

Down
1. 6234766
2. 5225766
4. 2522262
6. 43246

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Today's theme
**States and capitals**

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

7/30
Yesterday's solution

# Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
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## SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 9 | | 2 | | | 3 | 1 |
| | 4 | | | 5 | 1 | | | 7 |
| | 1 | | | 7 | | 6 | | |
| 4 | 6 | | | 8 | 5 | | | |
| | | | | 4 | | | | |
| | | | 9 | 1 | | | 6 | 4 |
| | | 4 | | 6 | | | 8 | |
| 6 | | | 8 | 3 | | | 1 | |
| 5 | 8 | | | 9 | | 3 | | |

7/31
DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

**SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE**
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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 6 | | 2 | |
| 3 | | 1 | | | |
| 6 | | | 2 | | |
| | | 5 | | | 4 |
| | | | 5 | | 3 |
| | 3 | | 1 | | |

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

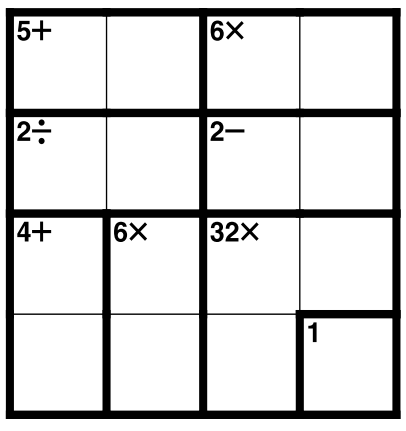
**Thursday's Answers**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| 6 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 2 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| 5 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 3 |
| 9 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
| 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| 2 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 6 |
| 3 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 7 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| 2 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| 6 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 1 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 |

7/30

## KENKEN

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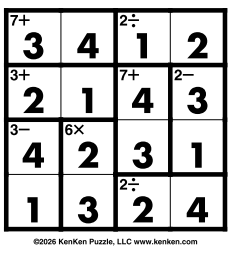
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

**YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION**

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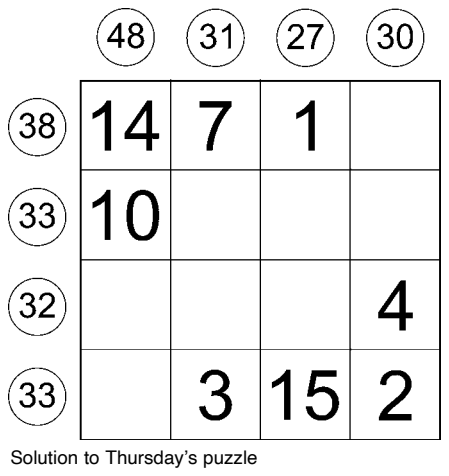
## KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **EASY**




Solution to Thursday's puzzle

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 4 | 14 |
| 3 | 16 | 6 | 5 |
| 9 | 8 | 15 | 7 |
| 11 | 10 | 12 | 13 |

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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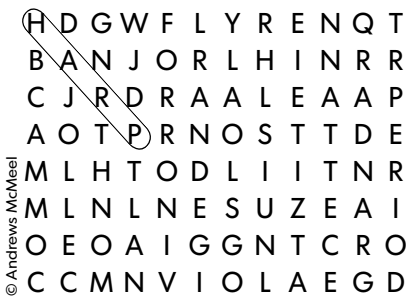
# Words

## WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 7/31

Find and Circle:
**Nine stringed instruments** ☑☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
**Three punctuation marks** ☐☐☐
**____ ____ Station** ☐☐
**Kelsey Grammer sitcom** ☐
**Leslie of the "Naked Gun" films** ☐

Thursday's answer: INCISOR WISDOM CANINE MOLAR BABY / BARGE FERRY CANOE / ARIES VIRGO LIBRA / MARCH JUNE JULY / HAIRY DAIRY

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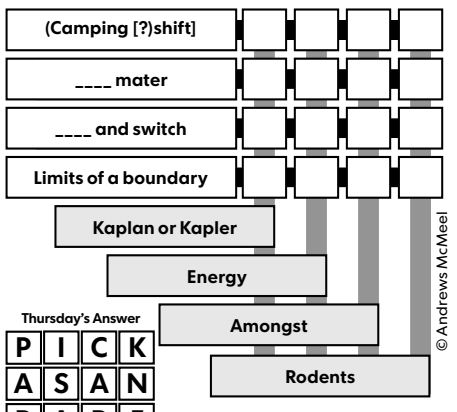
## QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/31

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Thursday's Answer

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| P | I | C | K |
| A | S | A | N |
| R | A | R | E |
| C | O | D | E |

7/30

**QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE**
puzzles.usatoday.com

## UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/31

1. **DON'T**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **RANGOON**

Clues:
1. 1996 No Doubt hit
2. Talk like a Parisian
3. Creamy coffee flavor
4. 2001 Tom Cruise film
5. Clear-day color
6. Chesapeake Bay catch
7. Chinese restaurant appetizer

**Thursday's Answer**

| | |
|---|---|
| SOLID | GOLD |
| GOLD | WATCH |
| WATCH | BAND |
| BAND | CLASS |
| CLASS | CLOWN |
| CLOWN | AROUND |
| AROUND | HERE |

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## DON'T QUOTE ME®

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**Author Danielle Steel talks about critics.**

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
**ALL BAKING BEST HAVING IT REVIEW SIT**

"A BAD _____ IS LIKE _____ A CAKE WITH ___ THE ___ INGREDIENTS AND _____ SOMEONE ___ ON ___."

7/31

Thursday's Answer: "You pray for rain, you gotta deal with the mud too. That's a part of it." - Denzel Washington

## 7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

| CLUES | SOLUTIONS |
|---|---|
| 1 tied up a boat (6) | |
| 2 ascended a hill (7) | |
| 3 a spirit of giving (10) | |
| 4 blue (7) | |
| 5 chatty, social birds (7) | |
| 6 Kylie Minogue's hometown (9) | |
| 7 national "bread" of Poland (5) | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MOO | SS | GE | CLI | OSI |
| ED | ES | TY | MAG | RNE |
| PI | BOU | JOY | NER | MB |
| TY | ZLO | RED | MEL | LE |

Thursday's Answers: 1. EXPLAINED 2. RESOURCEFUL 3. MAZES 4. QUINN 5. PEEVE 6. PIANISSIMO 7. BLOUSES 7/31

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## JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

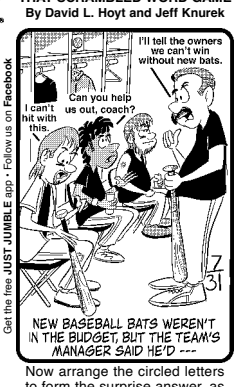
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TODTI

IJTNO

SYIMRE

RGIWNI


I'll tell the owners we can't win without new bats.
I can't hit with this.
Can you help us out, coach?
NEW BASEBALL BATS WEREN'T IN THE BUDGET, BUT THE TEAM'S MANAGER SAID HE'D ---
7/31

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: TITLE FROWN PROMPT MODIFY
Answer: Asked to write the introduction for a new book, the author was looking — "FOREWORD" TO IT

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## BONUS CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**
1 Genie's prison
5 Former GIs
9 Television channel
12 "That makes sense"
13 Draw forth
15 Flunk
16 "— of Eden"
17 "A Boy — Sue"
18 Wine city in Italy
19 Few and far between
21 Arrayed
23 Honey Bunches of —
25 Dye
26 One thousand billion
30 Infer
33 Director — Howard
34 Stories
36 Burst of gunfire
38 On — — (equivalent)
40 — orange
42 Top role
43 Type of code
45 Fit for a king
47 Fuss
48 Disconnect
50 Pursue (2 wds.)
52 Egyptian goddess
54 Writer — Ferber
55 Approached and spoke to
59 Liquefied
63 Billiards game
64 Author — Jong
66 Neap —
67 Dress for a rani
68 Skull cavity
69 Discord goddess
70 Antique
71 Refusals
72 Smell

**DOWN**
1 Fibs
2 "On the double!"
3 Tableland
4 Gas, British style
5 Blinds type
6 Actress — Gabor
7 Sepulcher
8 Trapshooting
9 Barrel for wine
10 Insect injury
11 Skidded
14 Actor — Murphy
15 True
20 Table seasoning
22 Tips
24 Energy type
26 Capture
27 Lassos
28 Pointless
29 At no time
31 Gripping device
32 Get away from
35 Smooth transition
37 Fragrance
39 Pasta variety
41 Continent
44 Minus
46 Lois of "Superman"
49 Ceremonies
51 Lose strength
53 Yellow finch
55 Lhasa —
56 Fossil fuel
57 Quantity of firewood
58 "The Flintstones" pet
60 Retread
61 Actress — McClurg
62 Schoolroom item
65 Stage hint

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H | E | A | P | | C | H | O | R | D | | S | T | A | B |
| O | L | L | A | | A | U | D | I | O | | C | O | S | A |
| O | I | L | S | | R | E | E | S | E | | O | U | S | T |
| T | E | S | T | E | D | | | E | S | C | O | R | T | S |
| | | | E | R | G | | | S | N | A | P | | | |
| M | I | S | L | E | A | D | S | | T | R | U | S | T | S |
| A | M | P | | | M | O | A | T | | S | P | L | I | T |
| S | P | A | | | E | L | V | I | S | | | O | B | I |
| S | E | D | A | N | | T | E | L | L | | | P | I | N |
| E | L | E | V | E | N | | D | E | A | D | B | E | A | T |
| | | | E | M | I | T | | | C | O | O | | | |
| T | O | W | R | O | P | E | | | K | N | O | C | K | S |
| A | R | I | A | | P | R | I | M | E | | M | A | N | E |
| P | A | N | G | | E | R | R | I | S | | E | R | I | E |
| E | L | S | E | | D | E | A | L | T | | R | E | T | S |

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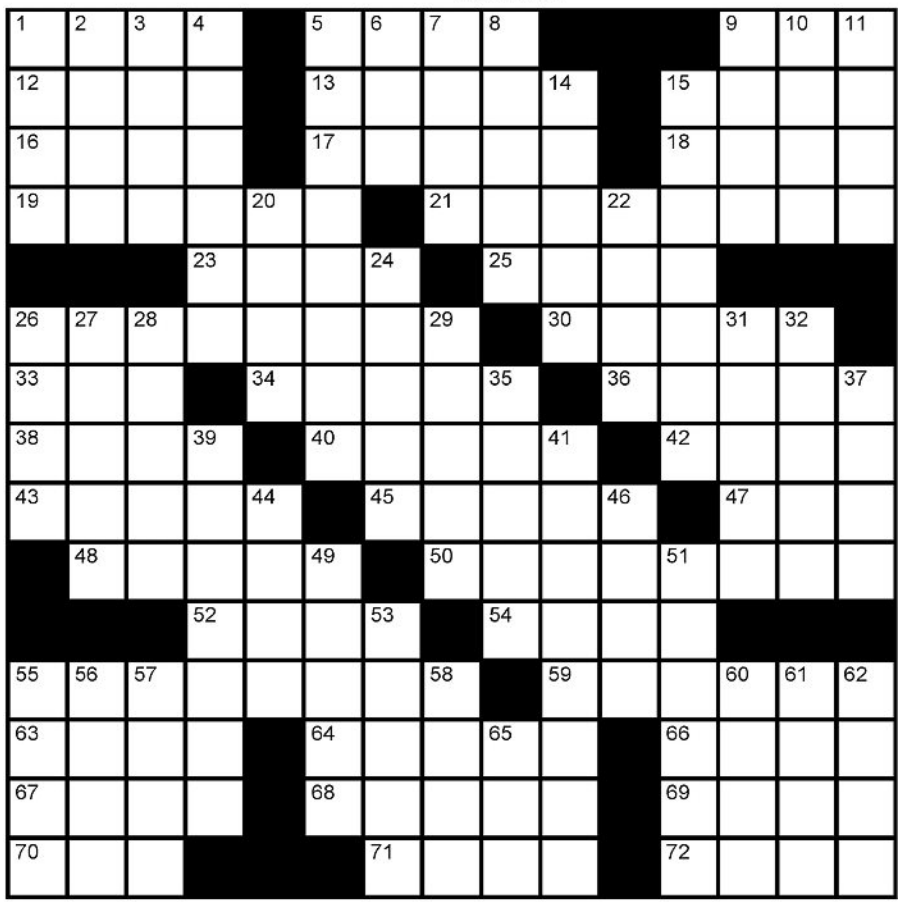

SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

# Moranis is back under the 'Spaceballs' helmet

**Brendan Morrow**
USA TODAY

SAN DIEGO – Thank the Schwartz! Rick Moranis has returned to Hollywood.

The "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" star, 73, received a thunderous standing ovation – and chants of "Rick! Rick! Rick!" – on July 24 at the San Diego Comic-Con panel for "Spaceballs: The New One," the long-awaited comedy sequel that marks his first film role in more than 20 years.

"I really wasn't retired. I was just negotiating," Moranis quipped during the panel after explaining he had been talking to Mel Brooks about doing a "Spaceballs" sequel as far back as 1989.

"This came along right at the right time," he said, adding that after hearing Bill Pullman would return as Lone Starr alongside his actor son, Lewis Pullman, "It just felt like, this is it. It's time, and yes. I said yes, and it is the best decision I've ever made."

Moranis took the stage after first popping up in the audience in his iconic Dark Helmet mask from the 1987 comedy, which was primarily a spoof of "Star Wars: A New Hope." On top of Moranis and Pullman, the sequel also brings back original star Daphne Zuniga as Vespa, not to mention Brooks, 100, as Yogurt. The new stars include Keke Palmer and Josh Gad.

Gad, who also cowrote the film, explained the main theme of the movie is nostalgia, and the "Star Wars" sequel trilogy appears to be one of the primary subjects of parody.

"We all sort of talked thematically about this word 'nostalgia,' " Gad said. "We love movies that look back. We love sequels.

"We love continuing these stories that we grew up with. But we started to analyze what that really means, why we love it, and we thought 'Spaceballs' is the perfect vehicle to catch us up on everything that's happened in filmdom, and in fan filmdom and pop culture, over the past 40 years."

**Rick Moranis dons the Dark Helmet again during the "Spaceballs" presentation at Comic-Con in San Diego on July 24. "I really wasn't retired, I was just negotiating," Moranis joked about his comeback.** AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Many had speculated Gad would be playing Barf, the late John Candy's character from the original "Spaceballs." Gad confirmed this is not the case, though he will be playing a member of the same species.

"Part of the conceit of this movie was I wanted it to be a love letter to John [Candy]," Gad said.

"John is one of my biggest idols. I want to put rumors to rest: I am not playing Barf in this movie, OK? That is a role that is singularly played, and will ever be played, by one person.

"John is at the beating heart of this film, and is a part of the reason why, I think, the movie ultimately has so much heart."

Moranis said he "kept having to pinch" himself on the set of the sequel, noting it felt "very strange" to put his helmet back on after all these years.

"It started to feel really good, and I really started to love it," he said. "And who knows, maybe it's the beginning of many!"

### Trailer skewers 'Avatar,' 'Star Wars' sequels

The panel ended with a sneak peek at the film, a mix of a traditional trailer and a meta monologue about how the film came together: A narrator explains it happened because, "with Hollywood studios merging willy-nilly," Amazon acquired MGM and "opened the vault" – and worse comes to worst, the movie will "one day be used as a write-off."

What follows was what the narrator describes as a "series of clips riddled with unfinished visual effects" teasing the film, and the sizzle reel included a shot at the "Star Wars" sequel trilogy: Dark Helmet duels with Yogurt and declares, "Somehow, I've returned ... somehow," a reference to an infamous line about Palpatine's return in "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker."

The trailer also shows a moment where Yogurt is frozen in carbonite, leading him to be dubbed "Frozen Yogurt."

The footage ended with a scene in which a Na'vi from "Avatar" walks into a bathroom to pee at a comically large urinal next to Dark Helmet, who turns to him and says, in Na'vi, "I see you."

But the film doesn't seem to be limiting spoofs to sci-fi, and there was plenty of roasting of Marvel during the panel. At one point, a graphic jokingly announced plans for a cinematic universe of endless "Spaceballs" sequels, a parody of how Marvel frequently lays out its future films at Comic-Con.

When a fan asked what other sci-fi remake they would like to star in, Gad joked about Marvel's failed efforts to launch a "Blade" movie with Mahershala Ali: "We'd make a really weird 'Blade.' But maybe it would finally get made!"

"Spaceballs: The New One" hits theaters April 23, 2027.

# Unabomber

Continued from Page 1B

Director Janus Metz ("Andor," "Borg vs. McEnroe") enjoyed the deep dive into the mind of a young Kaczynski. Though most people know about the Unabomber's criminal history, not many realize he was a math genius who got into Harvard at 16 and was recruited by Murray and his associate Christiana Morgan (Annabelle Wallis) as a guinea pig for experiments in mind control and manipulation.

These were "funded by the CIA and were some of the first traces of what later became the MK-Ultra experiments," Metz says. "Murray is seductive and charismatic, and as Ted starts to see him as a father figure, he discards his real parents and sees the shimmer of everything he is aspiring to be – until the reality of the experiments is brutally unveiled to him."

In the movie, the quiet and awkward Ted at first is belittled in these experiments, where verbal abuse is used to break him, and he ultimately becomes aggressive himself. Tremblay points out an important scene when Ted goes home and has an angry confrontation with his parents. "They find out that his grades have been suffering because of what they think is just a philosophy club that he had joined, and it wasn't," Tremblay says. "Ted snaps at them. He screams at them, he lashes out, and that was a very pivotal point because it showed that there were consequences to his abuse."

That timeline forms the man who, from 1978 to 1995, killed three people and injured more than 20 in increasingly sophisticated mail-bombing incidents. Joanne Miller is a fictional agent who in the film leads the manhunt for the adult Ted and uses the words in the Unabomber's manifesto to track him down. Reading that manifesto and listening to real agents' stories about the Kaczynski case was "the most helpful for me to understand the true weight these people carried during the investigation," Woodley says.

For his part, because a lot of Kaczynski's younger years are a mystery, Tremblay studied the cadence of his voice and attitude during recordings of him being interviewed by investigators. "That was just fascinating, listening to him speak and how confident and cocky and arrogant he was at the same time," the actor says. "He was this total lunatic living in a cabin, but he's just so articulate."

Tremblay was Metz's first and only choice for the role. "Jacob is in a very interesting place, breaking out from being a child actor and taking on complex roles," the director says. "He is in a very formative stage of life, as was Ted when he was at Harvard, so the two are linked in that sense. The world is wide open at that age, and you are so vulnerable to the people – the grown-ups – that influence you."

Tremblay, who was 5 when he had his first film role ("The Smurfs 2") and earned a Screen Actors Guild nomination for "Room" at age 9, did feel a connection to Kaczynski.

"I know what it's like to be in an environment where you're always going to be the youngest in a room," Tremblay says. "Obviously, my experiences have been completely different from Ted's. I've had wonderful people around me who have taken great care of me since I was young.

"Another reason I was drawn to this film is because there's a bit of a message of how important it is to protect the youth. We live in a world right now where so many young children are being harmed, physically and mentally. It really has consequences to their life and the person that they can turn into and who they might end up hurting as well."

# Spider-Man

Continued from Page 1B

In "Brand New Day," the character has experienced a lot, not all of it great, and the British actor is able to take a decade of playing Peter to a more meaningful place. Yeah, he's still throwing down with ninjas, shady law enforcement types, colorful hooligans and, yes, the Hulk. But the most relatable stuff comes with Peter facing his own mental health struggles and physical problems. ("I'm not in high school anymore," Peter quips as he stretches before a fight.)

Holland and Zendaya's strong on-screen chemistry has obviously carried over into real life, and there's something always joyful about watching what those two and Batalon have built as a group of friends. The new dynamic that gives "Brand New Day" a spark this time is Spidey and the Punisher (Jon Bernthal) together. "The Odyssey" let audiences enjoy a taste of their bond, but this fully immerses them in buddy-comedy vibes, contrasting the cursing, R-rated vigilante Punisher with his young masked friend who tries to keep him from killing everybody.

"Stranger Things" standout Sadie Sink also is in "Brand New Day," playing a character whom it's best not to know until watching the movie. (Hardcore Marvel comic fans will know and love her.) Yet she matches Holland's strong sense of gravitas with a role that's a great source of conflict and connection for Spidey. Like almost every main character here, this mystery young woman has secluded herself from others and needs to figure out she's not alone.

Though "Brand New Day" might not be the most rambunctious or exciting of Holland's Spider-flicks, it aims to be a little deeper than the average MCU installment while trapping you in its gratifying web.

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USA TODAY

**You can check the headlines from your home state or city**

We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 7B**

**New Six Flags coaster in NJ will set six world records**

Bakunawa, a free-spinning, floorless coaster will hold the marks when it opens in 2027. **Page 8B**

# DIVE INTO WONDER

**Travelers can dive with hammerheads at Bimini.**
PHOTO PROVIDED BY PADI; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION TREATMENT BY ABEL MUNIZ MONTENEGRO/ USA TODAY NETWORK

## These shark-diving destinations change how you see the animals

**Kathleen Wong** USA TODAY

Seeing a shark underwater when scuba diving is an exhilarating moment.

While some may find that prospect terrifying, others will find it eye-opening. For a long time, sharks have had a bad reputation as dangerous predators, but the risk of being bitten by a shark is "extremely low," according to the Florida Museum of Natural History's International Shark Attack File 2025.

The odds of a human being killed by a shark are 4,332,817 to 1, with the risk of drowning being much higher.

In reality, it's sharks and rays who are at risk of death at the hands of humans. Each year, 80 million of these marine creatures are killed, specifically by commercial fishermen. Almost one-third of shark and ray species are facing an increased risk of extinction, according to the Professional Association of Diving Instructors.

This year, PADI launched a Shark & Ray Conservation Specialty Course alongside the Global Shark & Ray Census, one of the world's largest citizen science initiatives, to encourage divers to understand why these animals are worth protecting.

When divers record their shark sightings, it

**See SHARKS, Page 6B**

# Auctions of art a hit on cruise ships

## Vacationers often can find keepsakes

**Nathan Diller**
USA TODAY

Laura Parks originally went to a cruise ship art auction just for fun – and the free drinks.

Parks, 56, got an invitation to the event in her stateroom aboard the Carnival Sunshine on a Bahamas cruise in April. "I was like, anytime I can get a free mimosa, I'm in," she told USA TODAY. "So, I was having fun, never raising my paddle or anything."

An auctioneer approached her, and she decided to buy a signed giclée canvas print of red roses by Michael Godard that caught her eye. Sifting through other pieces at a purchase appointment later that day, she teared up as an employee showed her another piece depicting purple roses and butterflies by the same artist. Her mother, who died in 2015, loved butterflies, and her favorite color was purple.

"I immediately got the chills, where the hair is raised on all your skin, and I had all the goosebumps, and I just felt her presence with me," she said. She took both artworks home to Arizona, where she hung them above her TV, and got two other pieces the auctioneer threw in free.

"Every time I see them, I just get this huge smile on my face that not only am I blessed enough to be able to take these vacations and go to these amazing places and have these amazing experiences, but I was able to bring a huge piece of it back home with me."

Artwork is often central to cruise ships' interior design, with paintings, sculptures and more setting a vibe onboard and helping communicate the cruise line's and the vessel's identities. But some operators also make an

**See AUCTIONS, Page 6B**

**Laura Parks, right, with her mother, Ella Margaret Mallory, in 2011.**
PROVIDED BY LAURA PARKS

# Skip Europe: These 5 U.S. getaways deliver same charm

**Kathleen Wong**
USA TODAY

A dreamy summertime Euro trip is more in reach than you think – and you don't even need your passport.

Europe is trending among travelers this summer, with an increased interest in picturesque, coastal destinations such as Split, Croatia, and Naples, Italy, according to data from KAYAK.

But those who can't swing an international trip don't have to give up their dreams of sipping a glass of wine in a charming seaside town. All they have to do is look in their own backyard.

The United States is home to an array of underrated gems offering a similarly relaxed ambiance and romantic aesthetic people seek out in their European getaways. The best part is you don't need to hop on a long-haul flight across the pond.

Here are five domestic destinations that'll make you feel as if you're in Europe, without the hassle of international travel, according to boat-renting platform Boatsetter.

### Newport, Rhode Island

Located on Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay, Newport is known for its opulent Gilded Age mansions reminiscent of European palaces, along with its equally stunning ocean views and beaches. "Here you can indulge in delicious seafood, reminiscent of the Mediterranean and engage in the robust yachting culture of this New England coastal city," said Val Streif, marketing manager at Boatsetter.

### Solvang, California

Near the Californian surf town of Santa Barbara is the charming village of Solvang, where travelers are transported to Denmark. Established in 1911 by Danish Americans, Solvang has earned the title of "The Danish Capital of America" for its authentic Danish-style architecture – including those iconic wooden windmills – and heritage, like bakeries serving traditional Danish pastries.

Travelers can leisurely meander the village's four blocks, stopping at wineries and the country's only museum dedicated to Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, who wrote famous fairytales like The Little Mermaid.

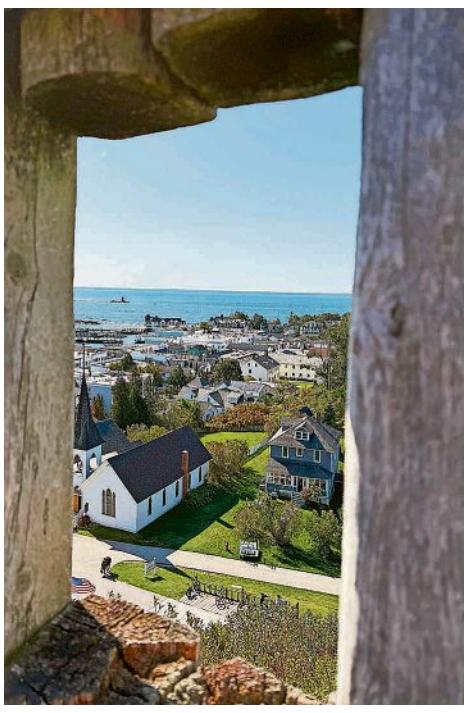
### Leavenworth, Washington

A Bavarian-inspired mountain trip can be found in Washington's town of Leavenworth. Nestled at the base of the Cascade Mountains, Leavenworth captures the Old World charm of a European alpine village with its wooden Bavarian architecture, German food like brats and schnitzel, and even its own Oktoberfest. While the village transforms into a winter wonderland during the holidays, the summertime allows for outdoor exploration such as river tubing, kayaking and hiking.

### Mackinac Island, Michigan

Set right where Lake Huron and Lake Michigan meet, Mackinac Island offers travelers a relaxed vacation surrounded

**See GETAWAYS, Page 6B**



**A view of downtown Mackinac Island from a Fort Mackinac lookout in Michigan on Sept. 30, 2025.**
JILLIAN FELLOWS/USA TODAY NETWORK

# Auctions

Continued from Page 5B

activity of selling art to vacationers seeking keepsakes and complimentary cocktails.

### How do cruise lines curate art on their ships?

Cruise lines take varying approaches to ship artwork – with some prominently displayed before guests even board.

Norwegian Cruise Line, for example, has partnered with street artists on the hull art for many of its ships. That includes its most recent vessel, Norwegian Luna, which is adorned with the 12 zodiac constellations in a piece by multidisciplinary street artist ELLE.

When I sailed on the ship in March, there was also a star-spangled mural in shades of blue and purple on my cabin wall and a tall silver moon sculpture outside on Deck 8, in keeping with the ship's theme.

"Art has the power to enrich our lives, broaden our perspectives and transport us to a different frame of mind, similar to how traveling to new destinations impacts us," Norwegian told USA TODAY in an email. "To select the art featured onboard, our team takes direction from the general aesthetic intended for each space and finds artists whose work speaks to the design and complements the story of the space."

Disney Cruise Line, meanwhile, draws on its iconic catalog.

"Artwork really plays such an important role in shaping the overall aesthetic and personality of each ship," Katrina Palaci, principal interior designer at Walt Disney Imagineering, said in an email. "Our guests have such a deep connection to Disney, Marvel, Pixar, and Lucasfilm stories, and the artwork across the fleet helps bring those stories to life in a way that feels both immersive and personal."

When designing its ships, the team considers artwork "part of the storytelling experience from the very beginning," she said.

On the Disney Wish, which features an "enchantment" motif, the aft staircases are themed around fairy-tale castles, while guests can find animals and forests at the ship's opposite end. The team collaborated with "partners at the Animation Research Library, the Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar, Disney Publishing, and Disney Live Entertainment, as well as external artists commissioned to create special pieces," Palaci said.

The Disney Destiny, on the other hand, has a heroes and villains theme, with a statue of T'Challa from "Black Panther" in its Grand Hall and illustrations of infamous villains like Maleficent and Thanos lining the walls. "In some cases, the artwork even supports wayfinding, helping guests know that they've arrived at their staterooms deck or that they're nearing a lounge or restaurant," Palaci said.

Disney's ships do not host art auctions, but they do offer Disney's Art on Demand, which allows guests to order via a kiosk displaying available pieces, pay in a merchandise location and have the artwork shipped to their home.

### How do cruise art auctions work?

Lainey Melnick, a luxury travel adviser and Dream Vacations branch owner, said the "traditional onboard auction model is most commonly found on larger contemporary and premium ocean cruise lines, where art auctions are offered as part of the entertainment program." Those often are operated by Park West Gallery, which works with a range of lines including Carnival Cruise Line, Norwegian and other major brands, according to its website.

If a ship has a dedicated art program, there are typically multiple related activities throughout each voyage, including auctions on multiple days, educational presentations and more, though the schedule can vary by line and cruise length.

At the former, auctioneers guide guests through the process while passengers can enjoy complimentary champagne or other refreshments, Melnick said. Bids usually are placed via paddle or other visual cues.

"The events are intentionally accessible to first-time collectors, and many attendees participate simply because they enjoy learning about art and watching the process unfold," she said in an email.

Park West, for its part, welcomes experienced buyers and those who may not have access to auctions on land.

"Park West Gallery has built a world-renowned entertainment experience that is a consistent presence throughout the sailings, allowing not only loyal collectors to browse galleries and onboard 'Art Spaces' as one would have access to a land-based fine art gallery or exhibition space; yet also allowing for all guests on the voyages to have that same artistic and cultural opportunity," John Block, its chief operating officer, said in an email.

Shipping logistics are typically handled for guests, as well. Parks said Park West took care of framing her pieces, and they began arriving at her home "packaged extremely well" a couple of weeks after she disembarked.

Carnival also partners with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and a portion of proceeds from art auctions go toward childhood cancer research.

"On the other hand, some luxury cruise lines focus less on art sales and more on creating a gallery-like atmosphere onboard," Melnick said. "Ships from luxury brands may feature museum-quality collections, commissioned pieces, sculptures, and installations that are intended to enhance the guest experience rather than serve as inventory for purchase."

**Art for sale at Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Solstice ship.** PROVIDED BY JOSH RIVERA

For instance, Regent Seven Seas Cruises – which also is part of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings – does not offer art auctions or an onboard sales program but has art collections on all its ships developed under the luxury brand's art director, Sarah Hall Smith.

"The collections span original paintings, sculpture, photography, mixed media and commissioned installations from internationally recognized and emerging artists," president Wesley D'Silva said in an email.

"Artwork is displayed throughout public spaces, restaurants, lounges and guest suites, creating an immersive environment where guests continually discover new pieces throughout their voyage."

The cruise line's Explorer Class has works by Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall, along with the only Fabergé egg permanently on view at sea. The company incorporates art into its shore excursions, as well, from gallery tours to museum visits.

"Art is an extension of the Regent experience both onboard and ashore, reflecting the brand's belief that travel and culture are inherently connected," D'Silva said.

### Can guests buy other art onboard?

Possibly.

"On ships with auction programs, guests can often inquire about artwork they discover outside the gallery itself," Melnick said. "Art staff can typically explain whether a particular piece is available for purchase, available through a future auction, or available as a special order."

Don't assume every piece on board is for sale, though, Melnick said. On luxury lines in particular, it's common for artwork to be part of its permanent collection.

### Is cruise artwork worth the money?

That depends on who's buying. Along with occasional original works, onboard art auctions commonly feature signed prints, limited-edition pieces and more, Melnick said.

"Whether pricing is higher or lower than a gallery ashore depends on the artist, edition size, market demand, and venue," she said. Melnick encouraged travelers making a significant purchase to research the artists ahead of time and compare prices.

There could also be some tax advantages depending on where the customer lives, where they have the art delivered and the type of piece they buy.

"Some artwork imported into the United States may qualify for favorable customs treatment, and purchases made in international waters may not be subject to the same local sales taxes as a gallery purchase on land," Melnick said. "However, buyers may still owe taxes based on their delivery address and personal tax situation."

Parks felt her pieces were "very fairly priced," and she paid about $2,300 total, including framing and shipping. For her, the purchases were a deeper kind of investment. Parks began taking solo cruises in 2022 as a way to take time for herself after years of focusing so much on her family.

"And it was nice to level up on this last cruise and buy art because it brought me joy – no other reason than because it brought me joy."

# Sharks

Continued from Page 5B

contributes to global research and a deeper understanding of why marine ecosystems need these animals.

"Sharks and rays need more awareness and more action at scale," said Kristin Valette Wirth, chief brand and membership officer for PADI Worldwide, in an April news release announcing the new census and course.

"By combining classic PADI education with real-world participation, we're giving the global community clear, meaningful ways to protect the species they care about most. This is what it looks like when adventure, purpose, and impact come together."

Diving with sharks in their natural habitat is an unforgettable experience and offers a chance to fall in love with these powerful yet graceful creatures.

Here are the best places in the world to dive with sharks, according to PADI.

### Great Barrier Reef, Australia

• **Operators:** ProDive Cairns and Divers Den

There's no other dive site more famous than the Great Barrier Reef, and for good reason. This marine ecosystem is home to an array of sharks and rays, including white-tip reef sharks, black-tip reef sharks, tawny nurse sharks, leopard sharks and eagle rays.

### Krabi, Thailand

• **Operator:** Fast Manta Krabi

A quieter alternative to the equally beautiful Thailand destination of Phuket, Krabi is a diver's paradise.

At dive sites located below gorgeous limestone islands, you'll encounter black tip reef sharks, bamboo sharks, leopard sharks and some ray species.

### Ishigaki, Japan

• **Operator:** Euro Divers Club Med Kabira Beach

Located in Okinawa, Japan's version of Hawaii, Ishigaki is renowned for having one of the biggest populations of manta rays.

From July through October, these majestic giants take over the waters.

At "manta cleaning stations," divers can witness a symbiotic relationship in action, as mantas gather and hover over reefs as smaller fish remove dead skin and parasites from them.

### Fiji

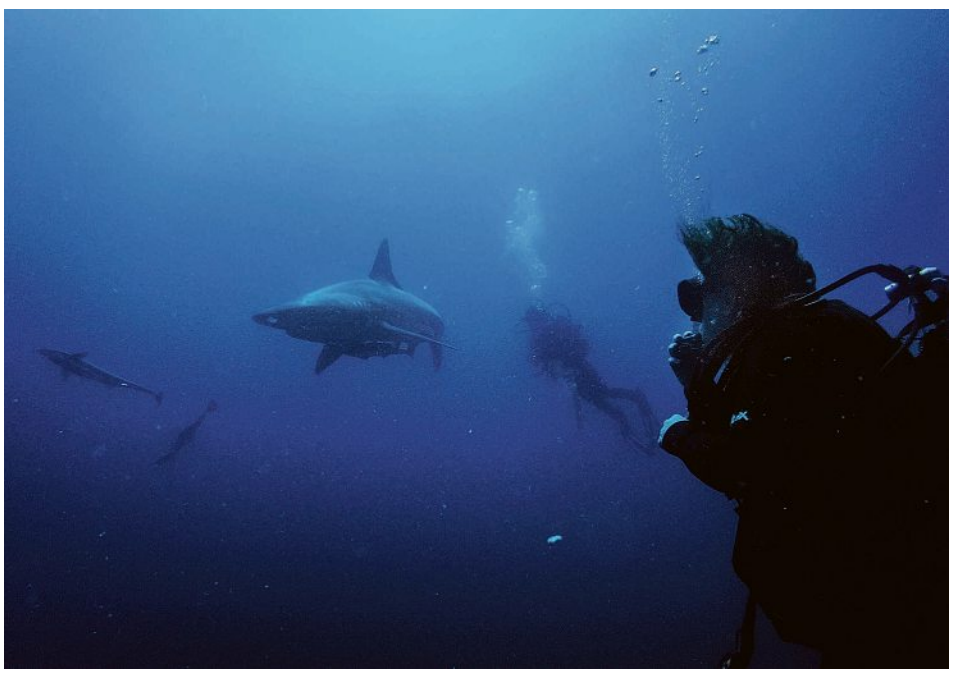
• **Operator:** Beqa Adventure Divers

Fiji is more than just a gorgeous beach destination.

Its waters are home to eight shark species, including tiger and bull sharks.

The island nation has taken strides to protect its marine creatures.

In 2004, Fiji established the Shark Reef Marine Reserve, the country's first national marine park and a shark sanctuary, with locals giving up their rights to fish in exchange for sustainable tourism dollars.



**Divers from the Blue Ocean Dive Resort swim with black-tip sharks during a baited shark dive in Umkomaas near Durban, South Africa.**
MICHELE SPATARI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

### Bimini, Bahamas

• **Operator:** Neal Watson's Bimini Scuba Center

For divers eager to spot a hammerhead shark, look no further than Bimini in the Bahamas. These unique-looking sharks flock to the shallow sand flats of the islands from November through April. These aren't the only sharks you could see here – lemon sharks, nurse sharks and Caribbean reef sharks also in these warm, tropical waters.

### Aliwal Shoal, South Africa

• **Operator:** Aliwal Dive Centre

An ancient sand dune off the coast of South Africa, Aliwal Shoal is a vibrant marine wonderland and a designated marine protected area.

# Getaways

Continued from Page 5B

by natural beauty such as limestone cliffs and rocky beaches. When walking down the charming Main Street, you won't be disturbed by honking or traffic since the island has banned cars since 1898. "The lack of cars on Mackinac means you'll do a lot of walking here, just like in Europe," Streif said. "For those needing a break from wandering, horse-drawn carriages are available, adding a romantic energy to this summer island getaway spot."

### Charleston, South Carolina

Charleston's Southern charm evokes a European vibe, with its cobblestone streets and beautifully detailed architecture with French and English colonial roots. Travelers can ride horse-drawn carriages and explore the history of South Carolina's oldest city. "Boating here is a must," Streif said. "Explore the outlying barrier islands, embark on a fishing charter, or see dolphins splashing around you at sunset on a Charleston boat charter."

# 50★States

News from across the USA

**ALABAMA Tuscaloosa:** The Saban Center will get its rooftop event space after the Tuscaloosa City Council approved funding, moving $1.3 million originally intended for the Mercedes-Benz Amphitheater.

**ALASKA Juneau:** The National Weather Service predicts Juneau's glacial Suicide Basin is now expected to fill between Aug. 8 and 12, a bit later than an initial estimate, KTOO reported.

**ARIZONA Douglas:** The United States will resume importing Mexican cattle Aug. 24 through a port of entry in Douglas.

**ARKANSAS Fort Smith:** The University of Arkansas-Fort Smith chapter of Kappa Sigma Fraternity earned its highest international recognition to date during the fraternity's national leadership conference, receiving the Founders' Circle Award while collecting several additional honors for leadership, academics and chapter excellence.

**CALIFORNIA Sacramento:** Covered California health plans are expected to increase by an average of 9.9% in 2027, according to the state's health care insurance marketplace.

**COLORADO Boulder:** Debate on whether moose are native to Colorado has taken an adversarial twist between a University of Colorado-led research paper and Rocky Mountain National Park. William Taylor, an assistant professor of anthropology and University of Colorado Museum curator, said new research he led shows clear evidence that moose have been in the southern Rocky Mountains, including Colorado, for at least centuries and likely longer, making them native. Rocky Mountain National Park disagrees and is sticking to its long-held beliefs.

**CONNECTICUT Stratford:** Officials reported Stratford's first West Nile virus detection of 2026 after mosquitoes collected in the town tested positive for the virus, WFSB reported.

**DELAWARE Dover:** A 30-year-old man has been arrested and charged with raping a homeless woman who was sleeping next to the Kent County Courthouse in Dover July 17.

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington:** The University of the District of Columbia extended its undergraduate application deadline to Aug. 7 to give 502 incoming Howard University students who were recently unenrolled over tuition payment issues an opportunity to enroll at another HBCU, WUSA9 reported.

**FLORIDA Tallahassee:** Juan Ponce de León finally made it to Florida's capital. Gov. Ron DeSantis debuted a new statue of Ponce de León in the Capitol July 17, giving the man who named Florida a spot in Tallahassee.

**GEORGIA Tybee Island:** According to Southern Living, Tybee Island has already recorded its highest number of sea turtle nests ever, surpassing the previous record with weeks still remaining in nesting season. As of July 15, Tybee Island had documented 49 sea turtle nests, breaking the island's previous record of 35 nests set in 2022, according to Southern Living.

**HAWAII Honolulu:** Centennial Park Waikiki has closed as crews begin a $310,000 project to replace the park's chain-link fence with new metal fencing, with the park expected to reopen by the end of October, Hawaii News Now reported.

**IDAHO Boise:** Federal officials announced that Idaho has been selected as one of five states being considered by the U.S. Department of Energy to host a new Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus, Idaho Capital Sun reported.

**ILLINOIS Springfield:** A new law signed by Gov. JB Pritzker aims to limit cellphone use in Illinois schools in an effort to "create distraction-free classrooms."

**INDIANA Granger:** Local pre-K-12 school Granger Christian School is closing its doors ahead of the 2026-27 school year after 55 years. The school said it is in the process of helping students and families receive their transcripts to enroll in other schools.

**IOWA Story County:** Broadband will soon be affordable and accessible in rural Story County thanks to a five-year, $10 million effort. Much of the installation is done, mainly in the southern and eastern parts of the county, according to a news release.

## HIGHLIGHT: MICHIGAN

People walk around the reopened Detroit Children's Museum in Detroit on July 25. ERIC SEALS/USA TODAY NETWORK

**Detroit:** Toys, noodle string necklaces, historical exhibits, science, stormtroopers, balloon flowers, face paint and more marked the reopening of the Detroit Children's Museum after a 14-year hiatus. The museum was established in 1917 and now has more than 2.5 million historical objects, science materials and global treasures. It is owned by the Detroit Public Schools Community District, making it one of the only museums owned by a school district in the United States. The museum closed to the public in 2012 when Detroit was going through bankruptcy. It will now be open once a month to the general public.

**KANSAS Topeka:** AutoDS, a drop shipping automation platform, named Kansas "amongst America's worst states for missing packages." Kansas was ranked 19th in states where packages are most likely to go missing.

**KENTUCKY Florence:** New signs show a mini-IKEA store wedged between a Hallmark store and nail salon. But it's not going to be a small version of the beloved Swedish furniture store when it opens. It's a 4,200-square-foot "plan and order point with pick-up" location that's likely opening this year.

**LOUISIANA Baton Rouge:** Louisiana's sweetest crop is under attack from an Australian native insect that arrived in the United States last year. The pasture mealybug, which can quickly damage or kill sugarcane, has been detected in 14 Louisiana parishes and Louisiana State University AgCenter entomologist Blake Wilson said there is "no playbook" to eradicate the pest.

**MAINE Castine:** Maine Maritime Academy's new federally funded training vessel, the State of Maine, arrived in Castine, marking a major milestone for the school's hands-on maritime education programs, News Center Maine reported.

**MARYLAND Ocean City:** Ocean City's beach will get replenished with new sand for the first time in five years with $12.7 million in funding approved by the Maryland Board of Public Works for the job. That funding will be combined with $14.3 million in federal money for the $27 million project.

**MASSACHUSETTS Marlborough:** Boston Scientific's board has approved a new company-wide restructuring plan aimed at cutting costs and to better position the company for future growth, the medical device maker said.

**MINNESOTA St. Paul:** A "coordinated cyberattack" targeted more than 30 community water systems in Minnesota on July 26 and July 27, the state's IT agency said.

**MISSISSIPPI Madison:** One of Madison's most active commercial developers is preparing to launch another project along the city's busy U.S. 51 corridor. Bridgforth Rutledge said work is already underway on a new seven-building commercial development behind the former Walgreens property he redeveloped.

**MISSOURI Jefferson City:** Newly released emails show that when the Missouri State Treasurer's Office learned in April that spreadsheets on its website unintentionally exposed the names of students receiving private school vouchers, it downplayed the leak to families and drafted a statement blaming its software contractor, Missouri Independent reported. That provider says that is not where the problem started. And the file itself carries markers suggesting it passed through a treasurer's office employee's computer before it was published, according to the news outlet.

**MONTANA Livingston:** Authorities said 11 people were hospitalized after eating foraged wild mushrooms in Park County, KBZK reported.

**NEBRASKA Lincoln:** Hundreds of immigrants from Nebraska and Iowa are having their cases heard in large-scale hearings known as mega masters in front of judges with previous ties to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. A mega master hearing groups dozens or hundreds of immigration cases into a single proceeding. The Department of Justice implemented such hearings nationwide to reduce court backlogs, drawing due process concerns from immigrant advocates.

**NEVADA Reno:** The median home price in Reno-Sparks hit new heights in June, with Reno breaking through the $700,000 barrier for the first time.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE Rochester:** The city's Conservation Commission voted to approve the expenditure of up to $300,000 from the Conservation Fund to support placing 130 acres of land into an easement, protecting the land, and its water sources, from future development.

**NEW JERSEY Princeton:** Five New Jersey communities were named among the wealthiest suburbs in the United States in a new national ranking, including one town that made the list for the first time. According to MoneyLion's 2026 ranking of America's wealthiest suburbs, Westfield, Summit, Tenafly and Ridgewood all returned to the top 50. Princeton also earned a spot, marking its debut on the annual list.

**NEW MEXICO Doña Ana County:** The Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association received a drinking water violation after failing to notify customers about a uranium exceedance, according to state drinking water records.

**NEW YORK Albany:** Warning letters were sent to police agencies in New York with formal cooperation agreements between local law enforcement agencies and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement as the state moves toward banning them by the end of August.

**NORTH CAROLINA Lake Lure:** Lake Lure's Washburn Marina is open once again, after being destroyed in Hurricane Helene. A "floating boardwalk" on pontoons now connects the marina and nearby Morse Park to the main recreation beach in the Rutherford County vacation and tourist town of 1,400.

**NORTH DAKOTA Valley City:** An audit found that Valley City State University failed to properly document, verify and approve eligibility for the university's Cultural Diversity Waiver and the Rural Teacher Support Program Waiver in 2024 and 2025, prompting recommendations for stronger oversight that the university says it has already addressed, KVRR reported.

**OHIO Cincinnati:** The city will devote as much as $2 million to help homeowners and businesses impacted by recent floods.

**OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City:** Oklahoma is one of five finalists to potentially host a planned federal hub for nuclear energy research, introduced by the U.S. Department of Energy aimed at expanding the nation's energy infrastructure.

**OREGON Depoe Bay:** The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Whale Watching Center and viewing area in Depoe Bay will be closed for repairs as soon as Aug. 1.

**PENNSYLVANIA York:** A federal judge ordered Republic Services of Pennsylvania, operator of Modern Landfill in York County, to pay a $9.2 million civil penalty for violating the Clean Water Act by repeatedly discharging pollutants into Kreutz Creek.

**RHODE ISLAND Providence:** Former House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi is free to jump directly from the General Assembly to the state Supreme Court without sitting out a one-year "revolving door" wait, a Superior Court judge ruled.

**SOUTH CAROLINA Spartanburg:** A group opposing construction of a 450-megawatt power plant on the site of the NorthMark Compute and Cloud data center is hoping the South Carolina Public Service Commission will weigh in on the future of the project. Concerned Citizens of Spartanburg County and the Southern Environmental Law Center have petitioned the commission to review the development under the state's Utility Facility Siting and Environmental Protection Act.

**SOUTH DAKOTA Pierre:** Republican South Dakota state Sen. Tom Pischke ended his reelection campaign as he continues to face felony charges for allegedly filing false or forged election-related documents, South Dakota Searchlight reported.

**TENNESSEE Nashville:** Live Nation knows The Truth, and the rest of Nashville will figure it out soon. The entertainment giant already holds stake in about 460 music venues across the globe, Securities and Exchange Commission filings show, and it's about to add another in Music City. On Oct. 1, Live Nation will open The Truth, a three-story venue fit for 4,400 people in the Wedgewood-Houston neighborhood.

**TEXAS El Paso:** Meta Platforms and the world's largest asset manager BlackRock announced a venture to develop and operate a data center campus in El Paso, a project that would cost about $14 billion in development.

**UTAH Salt Lake City:** Fourth District Judge Kasey Wright announced his resignation after less than two years on the bench, warning that overwhelming caseloads and 50- to 60-hour workweeks have created an unsustainable workload, KSL reported.

**VERMONT Montpelier:** Vermont has added nearly 400 acres to three state forest properties through land conservation projects completed in early 2026, expanding public access while protecting floodplains, wildlife habitat and water resources. The acquisitions in Underhill, Granville and Roxbury were completed by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, according to a community announcement.

**VIRGINIA Petersburg:** A former state senator suing a former Democratic aide and candidate for slander has withdrawn his suit after the judge ruled he could not call witnesses that had been excused from testifying. Joe Morrissey's decision brought to an end, for now, a $1.35 million case against Arlington County resident Kevin Saucedo-Broach.

**WASHINGTON Seattle:** The bullets that killed two victims at a Seattle festival did not appear to come from the gun allegedly wielded by a 15-year-old suspect in custody, authorities said in newly filed court records.

**WEST VIRGINIA Charleston:** A new study by Neighbors Bank ranked Charleston as the nation's top up-and-coming city for new homebuyers in 2026, WV News reported.

**WISCONSIN Sheboygan:** The American Patriot will soon make its second-to-last stop in Sheboygan for the summer, but it is expected to return next year. The American Cruise Lines ship will dock along South Pier on Aug. 2.

**WYOMING Gillette:** Gillette College will receive federal funding to launch new construction and chemical technology training programs and expand existing coursework to help prepare workers for jobs in the growing nuclear energy industry, Gillette News Record reported.

*From USA TODAY Network and wire reports*

# You now have to pay a tourist tax when traveling to Edinburgh

**Kathleen Wong**
USA TODAY

Trips to Edinburgh, Scotland, are now a bit more expensive, as the city became the first in the United Kingdom to implement a tourist tax on overnight stays on July 24, according to the city's official website.

Under the new policy, travelers to the Scottish capital will be charged an additional 5% of their overnight accommodations cost for a maximum of five consecutive nights.

In May 2024, the Scottish government first passed the Visitor Levy Bill, granting each city the power to introduce their own tourist tax. Edinburgh lawmakers formally agreed to the tourist tax in January 2025.

"We know that the city's popularity comes at a cost through the pressure it puts on our services and on the people who live and work here all year round," said Council Leader Jane Meagher in a July 23 media release. "This small new contribution from overnight visitors will help improve the services and public spaces we all depend on, while better managing the effects of tourism and major events."

It's expected to raise up to 50 million pounds annually – or over $67 million USD, as of July 26 conversion rates – for the city to "invest in protecting, supporting and enhancing Edinburgh's worldwide appeal as a place to live and visit," the city said in a January 2025 media release.

The tax's revenue is expected to fund various citywide projects such as keeping streets clean by upgrading and replacing public trash bins, investing in city parks by hiring more park rangers and planting more trees, and restoring heritage and cultural locations like the Leith Theatre to create a year-round live music space.

Scotland is just the latest European destination to charge a tourist tax. Over the past several years, cities such as Amsterdam and Venice have introduced similar fees to offset the negative impacts of overtourism and improve the quality of life for its residents. Following behind Edinburgh's lead, Glasgow is slated to implement its own tourist tax of a 5% charge on accommodations starting Jan. 1, 2027, according to Scotland's visitor levy website.

**The 5% tax is charged to only the accommodation part of a stay, not extra services like parking fees or laundry. It is also not a per-person fee, but applies to the room rate, according to the official website.**

Here's what travelers should know about Scotland's first tourist tax.

### Who pays the Edinburgh tourist tax?

The tax will be paid by visitors with overnight stays in Edinburgh, not day trippers. It will be charged to all overnight accommodation types, whether at a hotel, Airbnb, hostel or camping site.

### How much is the Edinburgh tourist tax?

The 5% tax is charged to only the accommodation part of a stay, not extra services like parking fees or laundry. It is also not a per-person fee, but applies to the room rate, according to the official website.

For example, if your hotel costs 100 pounds per night, the tax will be an additional 5 pounds per night. The final cost for a five-night stay will then go from 500 pounds to 525 pounds.

### How does the Edinburgh tourist tax work?

Businesses are responsible for collecting the tourist tax on the final bill, so travelers don't need to calculate it themselves.

Six Flags Great Adventure unveiled its newest world record breaking roller coaster, Bakunawa, on July 28. It's scheduled to be ready for the 2027 season.
BRIAN JOHNSTON/USA TODAY NETWORK

# New Six Flags coaster in NJ will set 6 world records

**Michael L. Diamond**
Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

JACKSON, NJ – Six Flags Great Adventure lifted the curtain on its newest thrill ride, Bakunawa, a free-spinning, floorless coaster that will hold six world records when it opens in the 2027 season.

The ride, named after a legendary sea serpent from Philippine mythology, will reach 382 feet high and speeds of up to 100 mph, sending guests spinning through the air, upright, inverted and sideways.

"You're going to climb 90 degrees straight up to the top of the 382-foot-tall tower, reaching the top and kind of sliding around the outside, which looks terrifying and amazing at the same time, before losing speed," said Mike Fehnel, park president for Six Flags Great Adventure. "And then you get to do it all again in reverse."

The amusement park introduced the ride July 28 to media and influencers, some of whom held their smartphones aloft and live-streamed the event.

The coaster, still under construction, was dubbed Project Purple, in a nod to raise awareness for pancreatic cancer. It has generated buzz among coaster enthusiasts worldwide who had wondered how the Jackson park would create a new thrill.

The answer: The ride will stake its claim as the world's fastest spinning coaster, tallest spinning coaster, fastest inversion, longest stall inversion, first floorless spinning coaster and the first upside-down launch.

"We have never seen a ride like this," said Ryan Chin, a content creator known as ElToroRyan, who was on hand documenting the day for his YouTube channel and its 170,000 subscribers. "The upside-down launch, the spinning trains, it's just very unique. It's totally different."

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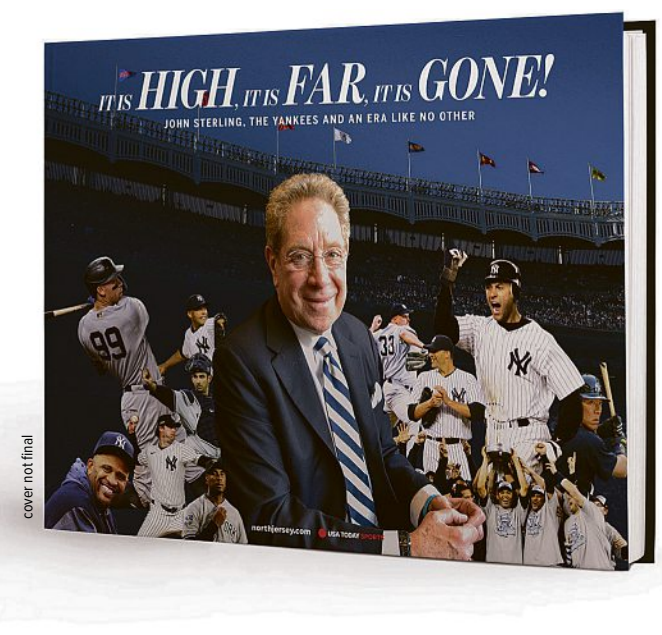


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# Underestimate at your OWN RISK

## There is no 'Next Indiana?' – that's the whole point



**Blake Toppmeyer**
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Curt Cignetti loathes wasting time, so let's get straight to the point.

Folks, no "next Indiana" looms on the horizon. There's just Indiana.

Within the college football ecosystem, the pundits reheated an old topic from last summer, debating which program is poised to make an Indiana-esque rise from the trash heap to the top of the heap.

If the options for summertime college football banter are trying to unearth the "next Indiana" or scrutinizing the foot care of Florida's coach – yes, that's a topic under debate – then I choose the former.

But, the boring truth is no program seems imminently poised to replicate the jesters-to-heroes turnaround the Hoosiers pulled off. Asking who's the next Indiana, as if an answer exists, ignores the marvelous rarity of the Hoosiers' outhouse-to-penthouse plot twist.

Could UCLA be on the upswing? Sure. Bob Chesney looks like a good hire. He kept James Madison humming after Cignetti left, and he's recruiting well at UCLA.

Does Kentucky suddenly have reason for hope? Indeed. Rookie coach Will Stein signed a nice transfer class, and he boasts a track record for quarterback development. Kentucky will become a winner "because of me, to be honest," Stein told reporters recently. That's Cignetti-level bravado, even if he lacks Cignetti's head coaching résumé.

Count Virginia Tech and Oklahoma State among programs with new coaches that should experience an uptick.

But, neither UCLA nor Kentucky nor any other woebegone program is on the verge of going 27-2 in two seasons, like Indiana did out of the chute with Cignetti at the wheel and the nation's largest living alumni base at his sails.

So, while we're busy mulling who's the next Indiana, here's a more relevant question:

Can the Hoosiers repeat as national champions?

Answer: The Hoosiers have a much better chance at repeating than Kentucky does of becoming the next Indiana.

**ABOVE: Indiana D-lineman Tyrique Tucker celebrates the CFP title. BELOW: Curt Cignetti is 27-2, plus 3-1 in bowls, to go along with the title as the coach of the Hoosiers.**

### Indiana football is still stacked, making a repeat possible

If Indiana's jersey said Ohio State or Alabama or the name of some other blue blood on the front, the Hoosiers would be garnering more serious consideration for the No. 1 ranking in the preseason polls.

They won't be No. 1, because I detect at least a hint of lingering skepticism about

See TOPPMEYER, Page 2C

PHOTOS BY MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

# WNBA suspends co-owner of Storm

**Mitchell Northam**
USA TODAY

Seattle Storm co-owner Celeste Keaton has been fined and suspended by the WNBA for five home games for comments she made to two fans on July 28, two people with knowledge of the decision confirmed to USA TODAY Sports.

The people spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the incident or punishment. The suspension was for a violation of the league's conduct standards. It wasn't immediately clear how much Keaton will be fined.

Seattle lost Tuesday to the Indiana Fever and the two fans approached by Keaton sat courtside and held up signs in support of Fever guard Sophie Cunningham. One of the signs, according to photos, read: "THANK YOU SOPHIE FOR SPEAKING UP FOR GIRLS."

The two fans, who have not been named, recounted the alleged interaction with Keaton in a video posted by podcast host Brandi Kruse. The two fans were wearing shirts from XX-XY Athletics, which bills itself as a brand that's "here to protect women's sports and spaces."

"This older lady comes up to us, and at first we think she's going to be nice, and she asks, 'What are you guys doing?' And then it was like 'Jesus loves everyone,' " the two fans told Kruse of the interaction. "... And she goes, 'I hope Jesus can forgive you for what sin you've done.' And then she told us we were '(expletive) insane.' "

In a statement to USA TODAY Sports, Storm majority co-owner Ginny Gilder said, "We are aware one of

See WNBA, Page 2C

# Neuheisel huddles with Sorsby over 2027 and NFL

**John Brice**
USA TODAY

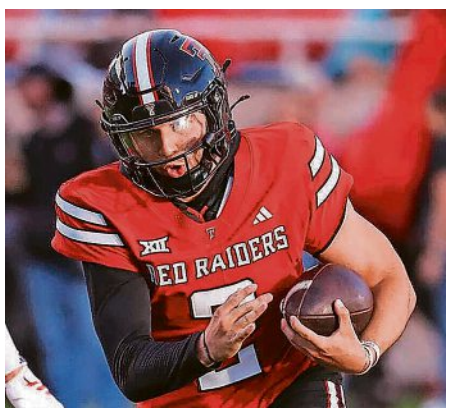
CHICAGO – The message could have been ignored. The phone call never returned.

Instead, Brendan Sorsby picked up the phone and called back Rick Neuheisel. So did Sorsby's father, Jamey, a former Texas high school football coach.

Neuheisel once was NCAA Public Enemy No. 1 because of ... an office pool – a 2003 NCAA men's basketball tournament bracket in a neighborhood competition that today would have gambling detractors swimming in hypocrisy.

A former head coach at Colorado, Washington and his alma mater UCLA, Neuheisel cautioned Sorsby, the ex-Indiana, ex-Cincinnati, presumptive Texas Tech quarterback now barred from college football, from becoming embittered.

See SORSBY, Page 2C



**Quarterback Brendan Sorsby runs with the ball during Texas Tech's spring game on April 17.**
NATHAN GIESE/LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

# Day now sees a 'different person' QB Sayin

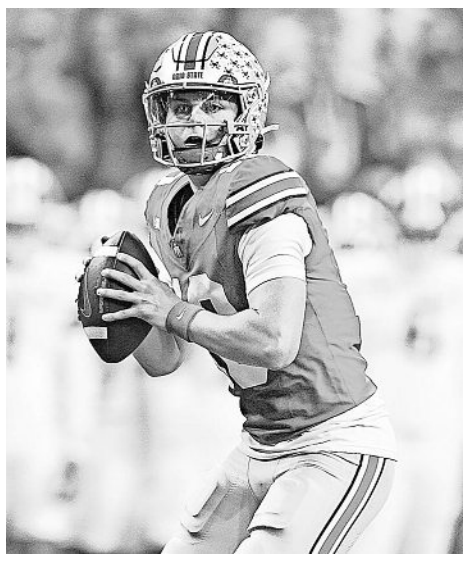
**John Leuzzi**
USA TODAY

Ohio State football coach Ryan Day doesn't see the same Julian Sayin who led the Buckeyes offense a season ago.

"(Sayin) has a different look in his eye," Day said July 29 at the Big Ten Media Days.

Sayin led the Buckeyes to a 12-2 overall record and a second straight College Football Playoff appearance last season, in which Ohio State would lose to Miami in the Cotton Bowl – a loss that ended the Buckeyes season with a two-game losing skid after dropping the Big Ten title game to eventual national champion Indiana.

"I said before, he had great success last year. He won his first start ever (at) home against Texas in a big top-five matchup, won our rivalry game (against Michigan) in the sideways snow, but then came up short at the end of the year. We all did," Day said. "But when you look in his eye now, you see a different person."



**Ohio State quarterback Julian Sayin is entering his second season.** ADAM CAIRNS/THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

According to Day, the growth isn't limited to experience.

"You see a different body," Day said. "He's worked hard, he's gotten stronger, he's found his voice even more, and he's got a great look in his eye. I think he's poised for a great season."

In a separate interview with the Big Ten Network desk on Wednesday, Day added that with Sayin changing his body, one can see the former five-star recruit's lower half more, while his "neck looks a little bigger."

Sayin, who transferred to Ohio State from Alabama, was tested out of the jump last season when Ohio State hosted preseason favorite Texas in Week 1, a top-five matchup that saw him outduel Heisman Trophy favorite Arch Manning in throwing for 126 yards and a touchdown in the Buckeyes' 14-7 win.

He completed 301 of 391 passes for 3,610 yards and 32 touchdowns with eight interceptions last season while finishing fourth in the Heisman Trophy race, 1,930 points behind Heisman winner Fernando Mendoza. Sayin would throw for three touchdowns and 233 yards in "The Game" against Michigan, snapping the Buckeyes' four-game losing streak to the Wolverines.

Sayin, a USA TODAY Network preseason first-team All-Big Ten selection, will face another demanding schedule that includes a road trip to Texas in Week 2 and conference games against Indiana, Oregon and Michigan. The latter two will be played at home in Columbus.

He enters the season with Heisman buzz, as he is tied with Miami QB Darian Mensah for the fourth-best odds on BetMGM at +1100.

Day outlined the next step in Sayin's development.

"If you say, give me the top three things about him, one of the top three things I would say is his intelligence. He can handle high levels of information. He can process things," Day said on the Big Ten Network. "So I think just taking his whole game to the next level, being strong in the pocket and delivering in big moments."

Ohio State is slated to open up the season at Ohio Stadium on Sept. 5 against Ball State at noon ET.

# Sorsby

Continued from Page 1C

"All of a sudden people thought I was unscrupulous in betting on college sports, when I had been in a basketball pool while coaching at the University of Washington," Neuheisel, an analyst with CBS Sports, told USA TODAY Sports on July 29. "I said there will be a tendency to want to be very bitter, to think that somebody had it out for you.

"And having lived through this, I can tell you that bitterness only impacts you. It doesn't get anybody that did you wrong, doesn't hurt anybody else. So, this happened, you have an opportunity to rebuild and go from here. Call it a life lesson and go be a fantastic role model in whatever it is you choose to do."

Sorsby, Neuheisel shared with USA TODAY Sports, did provide insight on his future plans.

"Sorsby was fantastic, he's 100% buying in and wants to just focus ahead," said Neuheisel, who won a Rose Bowl as UCLA's quarterback and also as Washington's head coach. "He actually thought about staying there (at Texas Tech) and just being the scout team quarterback, but he didn't want to be a distraction. He just wants to have this opportunity.

"He's hoping that he can get into the (NFL) Combine, maybe the Senior Bowl, and hopefully get a chance to be in an NFL camp as soon as possible (in 2027). All that to be determined."

What has no mystery, Neuheisel emphasized, is the root cause of Sorsby's "inevitable" lure to compulsive gambling.

"I don't think the Brendan Sorsby outlash was necessarily pointed at Brendan Sorsby," Neuheisel said. "I mean, what did we think was going to happen when you can bet on your phone and you can bet on balls and strikes, and you can bet on damn near anything, right?

"The Kalshi (predictive markets), now you can bet on anything you want. What did we think was going to happen? We have all these ads about betting and, you know, getting your first $200 free (in bets). They're going to lure people in. And the college kids are a primary target, so he got caught up in it. He's admitted it, he's rehabbed, and he's on a platform to go forward."

Neuheisel theorized the vitriol directed at Sorsby – on the surface – had an undercurrent of disdain for Texas Tech, which has seen its football program become in the pay-for-play era what Sorsby has been painted in gaming reform.

"The backlash was by a bunch of schools that really don't like what's happening at Texas Tech, which to me is you're using big money to just basically go buy everybody else because you've got a couple of fellas, John Sellers and Cody Campbell, who made a billion dollars from Double Eagle Energy.

"Listen, we've had big-money donors for a long time in college football. Most of it was under the table. Now, money is over the table. There's some jealousy, there's some outlash, 'We're not playing (Tech).'

"And while integrity of the game is certainly an issue, to me, it's that he got bought by Texas Tech, and Texas Tech was fighting to get him to play. Enough was enough."

**Fans hold a Sophie Cunningham sign during the first half of the Fever-Storm game July 28 at Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle. Cunningham plays guard for the Fever.** STEVEN BISIG/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

# WNBA

Continued from Page 1C

our co-owners made comments to two fans in attendance at last night's game. We apologize that this happened. Everyone who attends a Storm game deserves to feel welcome, and we remain committed to creating an inclusive environment where every fan is treated with respect."

Cunningham has drawn attention following an ESPN story that quotes the Fever star saying, "I think that I am here to extend love. But I also think with that love is truth, being honest. And I want to protect young girls in a locker room, or young girls in sport who shouldn't have to go against biological men."

Asked about that stance last week, Cunningham said, "I'm there to love, but I'm also there to love biological women. And I think there are rights that need to be protected. Like I said, I'm going to stand true to that. I'll never falter in my beliefs in that, but I have never once said I hated the trans community. Like I said, I think there's space for everyone."

Upon learning of Keaton's suspension, Cunningham wrote on X, "Everyone is welcome at my table! You can disagree and still be kind." She commended the two fans for "standing up" and said she'll be sending them gifts, then added Keaton's alleged actions were "truly embarrassing."

Before the Fever defeated the Storm, there was a small rally outside of Climate Pledge Arena in Seattle where a few dozen people showed their support for Cunningham and to promote statewide initiative IL26-638, which would bar transgender students from participating in girls sports at Washington public schools. Cunningham was not made available to reporters in the postgame news conference.

When Fever coach Stephanie White was asked about the rally, a team spokesperson intervened and read a statement, saying: "Neither our organization nor Sophie had any knowledge of this demonstration and no contact with its organizers. Our only goal as a team, whether at home or away, is to win basketball games and make Fever fans for life, and we are united in that mission."

Before the game, veteran Storm center Stefanie Dolson wore a shirt that said, "Trans Rights Are Human Rights." Photographs of her wearing the shirt were posted to the Seattle team's official social media accounts and garnered more than 3.7 million views on X.

**Transfer Josh Hoover is expected to be the starter this season for Indiana.** RICH JANZARUK/THE (BLOOMINGTON) HERALD-TIMES – USA TODAY NETWORK VIA REUTERS CONNECT

# Toppmeyer

Continued from Page 1C

Indiana's staying power, despite all evidence indicating the Hoosiers are built to last – at least so long as Cignetti is in charge and the donors stay engaged.

The Hoosiers sent eight players to the NFL draft after going 16-0, but they remain loaded. How loaded? Recently, when I cast my preseason all-Big Ten ballot, I wrote down the names of more Hoosiers than Buckeyes or Ducks.

When the ballots were tabulated, Indiana finished with seven selections on our USA TODAY preseason all-Big Ten lineup, matching Oregon's haul and outpacing Ohio State's four selections. The Hoosiers defense looks stacked. The offensive line remains robust. Transfer wide receiver Nick Marsh and running back Turbo Richard (good player, great name) addressed skill-position needs.

The key question: How big will the drop-off be from Heisman Trophy winner Fernando Mendoza to TCU transfer Josh Hoover?

### Big Ten armed with three national title contenders

Don't misinterpret my bullishness on Indiana as a knock on Ohio State or Oregon. Fact is, the Big Ten features three bona fide national championship contenders. (I wonder whether the SEC could say the same.)

If you're picking Ohio State or Oregon to win the conference, I get it. Both feature top-of-the-line starting quarterbacks who've proved themselves inside the Big Ten. Jeremiah Smith and Bo Jackson join Julian Sayin to give Ohio State three Heisman hopefuls. Oregon's defensive line could be second to none, just as Indiana's linebackers could be second to none.

There remains a big three in the Big Ten for 2026, and it doesn't include Michigan.

It's Ohio State, Indiana and Oregon.

Or, it's Indiana, Oregon and Ohio State.

Or, it's Oregon, Ohio State and Indiana.

We can debate the order, but those three form the Big Ten's Cerberus. The more I examine the Hoosiers, the more I think their teeth could be sharpest.

"I like the guys we've got in the locker room," Cignetti told ESPN recently. "We've been successful every year in the past, and I don't see any reason why we can't be successful every year in the future."

I don't either.

"Why go somewhere else?" Cignetti mused aloud.

He already answered that question. There's no reason to go anywhere else.

Cignetti answered another question, too. Last year, when we asked who's the next Indiana, Cignetti and his Hoosiers showed there is no next Indiana, there's just Indiana. That's still true.

*Blake Toppmeyer is the USA TODAY Network's senior national college football columnist. Email: BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow him on X @btoppmeyer*

COMMENTARY

# Notre Dame sports sold on SoFi patch

**Tom Noie**
The South Bend Tribune
USA TODAY Network

**Notre Dame linebacker Jaylen Sneed (3) waves to fans after the Blue-Gold game on April 25 at Notre Dame Stadium in South Bend.** MICHAEL CATERINA/IMAGN IMAGES

SOUTH BEND, IN – SoFi ... so what?

That was the first reaction when Notre Dame athletics announced on July 28 a multiyear agreement with SoFi Technologies, which becomes the first non-athletic apparel brand to have its patch on the jersey of every Irish athletics uniform.

There it was on the enclosed promo picture, on the left side of the traditional blue home football jersey. Likely, the basketball jerseys and hockey sweaters this winter. Baseball and lacrosse and softball come spring. Those days of seeing only an Adidas or an Under Armour logo seem so yesterday.

Yahoo Sports reported that the agreement is for six years at $18 million to $20 million per year, which would make it the most lucrative in college sports. Fitting. It's Notre Dame. A Notre Dame source confirmed to the Tribune that it will be a "multiyear" partnership. Notre Dame does not comment on or release specific financial numbers.

Let's say eight figures a year for at least the next six and go from there.

The university termed the agreement "landmark," which is a funny way to say necessary. Mandatory, even. It's ironic that SoFi becomes the "official financial services partner of Notre Dame Athletics" because this is indeed all about one thing.

Money.

As in, more of it.

Money has replaced recruiting as the lifeblood for every college athletic program. Those who have it can dream national championship dreams. Those who have it also need more ways to get more of it. Five-star recruits are nice, but another $5 million into the athletic fund is paramount.

Ten years ago, the thought of what happened on this July day would have seemed laughable. Ludicrous, even. Then? Not at Notre Dame.

Today? Even at Notre Dame. It's a necessary part of doing business for every college athletic department. Find some athletics real estate somewhere, slap a logo on it, cash that check and keep the athletics machine rolling.

It doesn't look right, but nothing does about college athletics, where everything about what was once sacred is for sale. Save the outrage for something else. Like gas prices. Or inflation.

Advertising patches on college uniforms? Just another business day. Ohio State did its deal with JP Morgan Chase on July 27. Notre Dame did its July 28. Alabama? Michigan? Texas? You're on the clock. Get a deal done, fellas.

Schools have massive, multimillion-dollar athletic payrolls to meet. At Notre Dame, the football roster will run nearly $50 million to help the school to its first national title since 1988. As you read, said football program continues to transition from the outdated Guglielmino Athletics Complex next door into Shields Hall, which likely will carry a final price tag of nearly $200 million.

Jerseys patches today, what next tomorrow?

Don't think Notre Dame, or any other school of higher learning that competes at the highest level of Division I athletics, will stop at jerseys and call it a day. If that little space on the right side of the blue or white or green or whatever color they decide to make the uniform, is prime real estate for advertisers (i.e., money), what's next?

Naming the FieldTurf inside Notre Dame Stadium will be next. Bringing advertising signage inside the House that Rockne Built will follow. Every quarter will be "Notre Dame Football brought to you by ... ." Slapping a national brand logo on the Word of Life (Touchdown Jesus) mural on Hesburgh Library might be considered. Just kidding, though somewhere, somebody is like, well, you know ...

No. Just no.

The gold helmet? Also untouchable.

This SoFi/Notre Dame partnership is added proof that college sports are professional sports. Stop insisting otherwise. There was Notre Dame athletic director Pete Bevacqua still playing the hits with his quotes about the "student-athlete" and "4 For Forever" and explaining away about how SoFi will do this and this and that for future student-athletes.

He didn't say the obvious – SoFi will help offset the constant burden of the football program or the basketball programs (yeah, right) or any other Irish outfit from sweating out having to meet this season's or next season's or some season's payroll.

College athletic programs *need* this kind of financial resource. We're not far off from some school not being able to afford football.

Or basketball.

Or both.

If the Irish football program's payroll flirts with $50 million this season, what will it be next season? Two years from now? Three?

Just get to student-athletes as university employees, get to collective bargaining and get on with it.

College sports forever changed in 2021 when the decision was made to pay "student-athletes." Paid as in $5 million per season for some and $6 million for others. We're not going back. Payrolls and logos and all they entail are here to stay. Get used to them. Hate them all you want but understand that this partnership agreement is just the start.

Everything athletic on that campus has a price. Must make more money. Must meet that player payroll. We're not far from "Notre Dame Football sponsored by (insert advertiser here)" That day's coming, as is the one where head football coach Marcus Freeman looks like he's wearing a NASCAR jumpsuit on the sideline with advertising logos placed here and there and everywhere.

Everybody – and everything – is for sale. Every college athletics administrator has their hand out.

This is life today in the NBA. This is life today in MLB. In the WNBA. In auto racing. Why should it be different in college football? In college athletics? We learned on a sleepy Tuesday afternoon in late July that it's not.

So, SoFi ... so what?

COMMENTARY

# Big Ten dunks on SEC in hot talkin' season

**Blake Toppmeyer**
USA TODAY

**Ohio State coach Ryan Day shakes hands with Illinois coach Bret Bielema following the Buckeyes' 34-16 win Oct. 11, 2025, at Gies Memorial Stadium.** ADAM CAIRNS/ THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Nick Saban spoke, and everyone shook their heads. Or rolled their eyes. Or, they barked in laughter.

And, let's just say we weren't laughing with Saban when he recently made the case the SEC retains conference supremacy despite not sending a team to the national championship game in any of the last three football seasons.

"First of all, whoever wins the national championship doesn't define who has the best conference," Saban said on ESPN. "I think the best conference gets defined by how many good teams you have from top to bottom."

The GOAT retired and became a shill. Sad.

Speaking of the bottom, did anyone get a look at Arkansas last season? Not pretty.

Anyway, we're supposed to believe the coach who became obsessed with pursuing and maintaining greatness while winning seven national championships now believes superiority is defined not by trophies but by your number of 8-4 teams?

Sorry, I don't buy it. Neither does anyone else.

That's the thing about propaganda: To be effective, it must be believable.

An X account affiliated with ESPN, the SEC's usual propagandist-in-chief, tweeted the clip of Saban's hot air alongside an emoji of the dubious thinking face.

Might as well have added the Ron Burgundy GIF: *I don't believe you!*

The Big Ten isn't just winning championships. It's winning at the microphone.

Illinois coach Bret Bielema got fired from the only SEC job he ever had, but he embodies the Big Ten's spirit of looking forward – or, at least, relishing the moment – rather than gazing longingly into the rearview mirror. Bielema delivered one of the great lines of talkin' season when he said at Big Ten Media Days the SEC wants "to live in 2005 forever."

## SEC lives in past, pretends present isn't real

Bielema got the year wrong – the SEC's reign spanned from 2006 to 2022 – but the sentiment rang true. The SEC lives in the past. Instead of acknowledging the Big Ten's takeover and letting it serve as motivation, the SEC's commissioner, coaches and spin-doctor Saban pretend it's not happening.

Here's what is happening: College football now orbits around the Playoff, and SEC teams are 0-4 against the Big Ten in Playoff games since Georgia beat Ohio State on New Year's Eve to wrap up 2022.

Greg Sankey typically aces the rhetoric circuit, but he sounded warped and broken when he insisted two months ago he's still in charge of the best football conference, "by far." As proof, he cited metrics he's reviewed privately.

No word yet on whether Sankey believes in Bigfoot, too.

Sankey's Big Ten peer, Tony Petitti, normally opts for a more muted tone in the pulpit battles, but he found his voice at media days.

He cited the Big Ten's 11 Playoff victories the last two seasons, which is "more than double the next-closest league," and he responded to the SEC's argument that its mid-tier is better than the Big Ten's.

"This idea that the middle of our conference isn't hard is just not right," Petitti said.

If he'd wanted to hang on the rim, he could've mentioned the results of the Music City or ReliaQuest bowls, but Petitti let that slide.

## Big Ten now home to 'good quarterback play'

As to how the Big Ten claimed the pole position, Bielema offered the obvious explanation.

"When (transfer portal and NIL) came into college football, the whole world changed," Bielema said.

In other words, good players will happily play in the conference up north if you pay them. The power evolution goes deeper than booster bucks, though. It's also about the Big Ten turning quarterback play into a feature instead of a bug.

Nobody tossed it better last season than Indiana's Fernando Mendoza, but Ohio State's Julian Sayin and Oregon's Dante Moore ranked among the nation's best quarterbacks, too.

Iowa never would be credibly accused of setting the standard for quarterback play, but Mark Gronowski didn't look out of place going up against Vanderbilt's Diego Pavia, the Heisman runner-up, in the Hawkeyes' bowl win last December.

"Good quarterback play, as we see, matters a lot in winning," Southern Cal coach Lincoln Riley said. "And there's a lot of really good ones in this league right now."

Riley's own good quarterback, Jaiden Maiava, gives USC a shot at qualifying for the Playoff for the first time.

In response to Saban bloviating that the SEC asserts its superiority in the middle and bottom levels of the league, Bielema tweeted two scores.

Illinois 21, South Carolina 17, 2024.

Illinois 30, Tennessee 28, 2025.

Winning remains the best mic drop.

*Toppmeyer is USA TODAY Network's senior national college football columnist. Email BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow on X @btoppmeyer*

# Browns' Sanders, Watson open camp locked in QB battle

**Jack McKessy**
USA TODAY

**Browns QBs Shedeur Sanders, left, and Deshaun Watson participate in drills in minicamp on June 10.** JEFF LANGE/USA TODAY NETWORK

With fewer than eight weeks to go before the start of the regular season, the QB1 spot on the Cleveland Browns depth chart still reads: TBD.

Browns head coach Todd Monken told reporters on July 29 that veteran Deshaun Watson and second-year Shedeur Sanders will continue their battle for the starting job at training camp. Neither player made enough of an impression on their new head coach in the spring to earn the QB1 spot as summer practices begin.

"Nothing's really changed," Monken said. "We anticipate alternating. First of all, all four quarterbacks are going to compete. They all won't get equal reps. Obviously, we will alternate, just like we did in the spring, Deshaun and Shedeur with the ones."

The Browns are one of three teams with a starting quarterback battle underway during training camp, along with the Minnesota Vikings (J.J. McCarthy vs. Kyler Murray) and Atlanta Falcons (Tua Tagovailoa vs. Michael Penix Jr.). But where both Atlanta (Tagovailoa) and Minnesota (Murray) have apparent leaders in their quarterback duels, there is less certainty in Cleveland.

What is apparent is that the Browns' QB battle is down to Watson and Sanders. Cleveland has two other young quarterbacks on its roster – 2025 third-rounder Dillon Gabriel and 2026 sixth-rounder Taylen Green – but Monken's comments suggest neither will get first-team reps in training camp this year.

"We have to divide the reps up according to the depth chart," Monken said. "In a perfect world … I would prefer the ones get 50% (of reps), the twos get 33%, and the threes get 17%, and somewhere the other guys have got to fill in. Can you always count on that? No. So, the more those guys, you start to see them with the ones, you can kind of anticipate they're our starters."

Monken also said he isn't taking into account past performance when making his decision, meaning training camp performance will weigh heavily on the final call. He said he doesn't have a deadline for choosing a starter outside of the obvious, necessary one: Week 1 of the regular season.

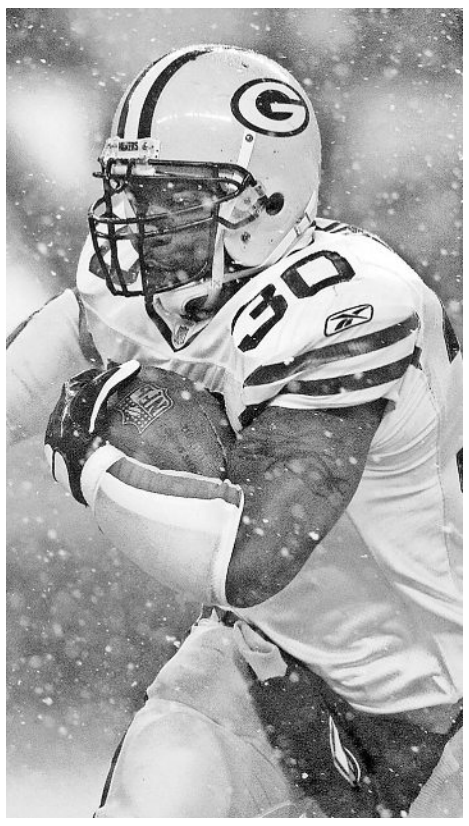
"The easiest way for me to say that – and it still won't stop you from asking – is the first game," Monken said. "We're gonna have to have a starter the first game, right? Ultimately, I'm not going to decide who the starter is. They decide by their play. Their play decides who the starter is."

Watson is in the final year of the fully guaranteed, five-year, $230 million deal he signed in 2022. He hasn't played since Week 7 of the 2024 season after tearing his Achilles in a game then re-tearing it in January 2025. Watson is averaging 177.1 yards, one touchdown and 0.6 interceptions per game in 19 starts with the Browns over three years.

Sanders is entering his second season in the NFL after the 2025 fifth-round pick made seven starts. He threw for 1,400 yards with seven touchdowns and 10 interceptions in eight games. He also took 23 sacks in those eight appearances for 164 lost yards.

# Packers RB legend Green reveals early Parkinson's

**Nick Brinkerhoff**
USA TODAY



**Ahman Green, who played for the Seahawks, Packers and Texans, finished a 12-year NFL career with 9,205 rushing yards.** MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES

Ahman Green, the Green Bay Packers all-time leading rusher, revealed he has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Green revealed the diagnosis to Tyler Dunne during a July 29 appearance on the Go Long Podcast.

"Last year, I got diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's," Green told Dunne. "I had a little bit of the feet twitching when I'm in my sleep and stuff like that.

"I knew something was going on long before that. I just got ahold of some doctors that I was able to get in contact with. Get the diagnostics, get the testing. And finally got it tested last, I think it was January of 2025."

Green added that he didn't want to share the diagnosis publicly until his family was aware of the news.

"I didn't share it for a long time because I wanted to let my kids know, my family," Green said. "And I did … I got four daughters and a son. I let them all know first before I told friends, family, somebody like yourself."

Green pointed to nutrition and cleanses are part of his routine now, comparing it to an oil change for a boat or car. He added that helps him stay on track in this process and stay in control.

"Helping my kids with the information, letting them know, but then say, 'I got the reins. I'm in control. I'm not going to let this control me.' There is some medicines that I've been taking from the doctor's side of it, so I made sure on my protocol there, but then on my side, my food and my medicine as well is a huge part of my thing – making sure I stay on top of all the things that are going on with my body."

When asked about symptoms, the 49-year-old noted that his short-term memory is "trash" and he has to remind himself of things by repeating it or writing it down. Other symptoms include a twitch in his sleep and sleepwalking.

Green expressed a desire for the connection between football, head trauma, injuries and Parkinson's to be discussed more, while remaining optimistic about his future.

"It needs to be up front," Green said. "It needs to be a topic that's always hit. And it's not the end-all.

"To me, I have a jump ahead of it. Just like anybody discovering that they have some type of cancer in their body, I'm ahead of it right now."

Green played 12 seasons in the NFL after being drafted by the Seattle Seahawks in the third round in 1998. He went on to play eight seasons with the Packers, making the Pro Bowl four times. He remains the Packers' all-time leading rusher with 8,332 yards.

The running back certainly isn't alone in this fight either.

Green's former teammate, Brett Favre, revealed his Parkinson's diagnosis in 2024.

# WEATHER

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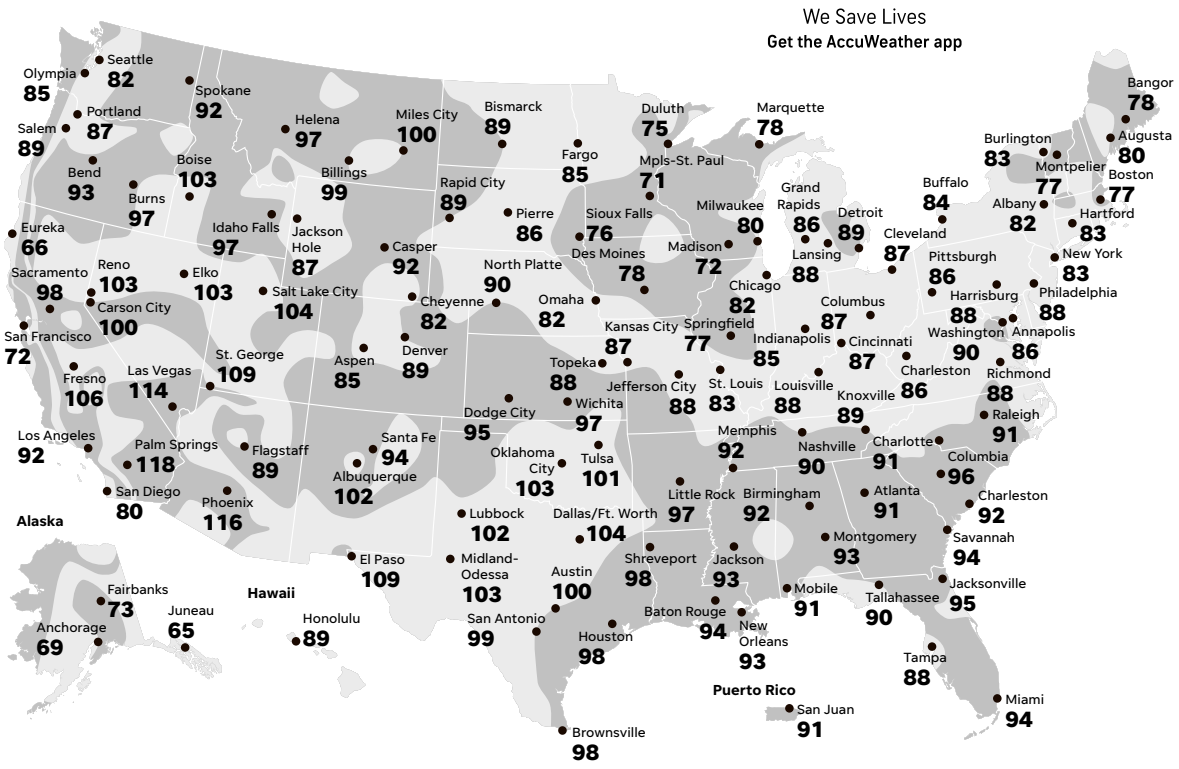
## WEEKEND FORECAST

The latest heat dome of the summer will linger in the **West** into the weekend with some of the highest temperatures of the year so far for some areas. Spotty thunderstorms from lingering moisture will lead to sporadic flash floods in the **Rockies**. The heat, dry lightning and winds will raise the risk of new wildfires.

As rather cool air lingers in the **Northeast** in the wake of the recent rainstorm and flash floods, a swath of rain will travel from **South Dakota**, **Minnesota** and **Wisconsin** Friday to the **Ohio Valley** this weekend. Just south of this steadier rain will be a zone of heavy to severe thunderstorms. Locally heavy storms will also riddle **Florida** and the **Gulf Coast** states, westward to **Louisiana** into this weekend as well.

## FRIDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES




## U.S. CITIES

| | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|
| Albany, N.Y. | 82/64pc | 86/68pc |
| Albuquerque | 102/71t | 93/69t |
| Amarillo, Texas | 98/68t | 93/65s |
| Anchorage, Alaska | 69/55s | 67/54s |
| Atlantic City, N.J. | 82/70pc | 82/71pc |
| Augusta, Ga. | 94/72pc | 95/71t |
| Austin, Texas | 100/77pc | 97/74t |
| Baton Rouge, La. | 94/79t | 92/77t |
| Billings, Mont. | 99/69pc | 105/72s |
| Birmingham, Ala. | 92/76t | 83/74t |
| Bismarck, N.D. | 89/62pc | 96/66s |
| Boise, Idaho | 103/72s | 102/60s |
| Buffalo, N.Y. | 84/67pc | 84/65t |
| Burlington, Vt. | 83/64c | 85/70t |
| Cedar Rapids, Iowa | 77/64r | 78/63w |
| Charleston, S.C. | 92/76pc | 91/76t |
| Charleston, W.Va. | 86/62s | 81/68pc |
| Cheyenne, Wyo. | 82/56t | 88/57pc |
| Cincinnati | 87/70c | 77/68t |
| Cleveland | 87/71pc | 83/68t |
| Columbia, S.C. | 96/75s | 94/75t |
| Columbus, Ohio | 87/70pc | 80/69t |
| Corpus Christi, Texas | 95/77s | 98/78s |
| Daytona Beach, Fla. | 91/74t | 88/75t |
| Des Moines, Iowa | 78/64t | 83/65pc |
| Duluth, Minn. | 75/60t | 77/56pc |
| Durham, N.C. | 90/68s | 88/71pc |
| El Paso, Texas | 109/80s | 99/76t |
| Fairbanks, Alaska | 73/49pc | 75/55pc |
| Flagstaff, Ariz. | 89/55t | 92/59pc |
| Fargo, N.D. | 85/58t | 88/65s |
| Fort Myers, Fla. | 90/79t | 91/76t |
| Fort Wayne, Ind. | 85/67pc | 75/65t |
| Fresno, Calif. | 106/71s | 107/73s |
| Green Bay, Wis. | 79/65r | 76/58t |
| Harrisburg, Pa. | 88/67pc | 89/73pc |
| Hartford, Conn. | 83/63pc | 85/68pc |
| Indianapolis | 85/69pc | 79/66t |
| Jackson, Miss. | 93/77t | 93/73t |
| Jacksonville, Fla. | 95/76t | 92/74t |
| Jefferson City, Mo. | 88/70t | 75/66t |
| Kansas City | 87/64t | 82/63pc |
| Key West, Fla. | 91/82t | 92/82t |
| Knoxville, Tenn. | 89/68pc | 83/69t |
| Lincoln, Neb. | 82/64t | 86/63s |
| Little Rock, Ark. | 97/81t | 93/72t |
| Louisville, Ky. | 88/71c | 85/70t |
| Manchester, N.H. | 81/62pc | 88/66c |
| Memphis, Tenn. | 92/77t | 88/72t |
| Milwaukee | 80/67r | 71/63t |
| Mobile, Ala. | 91/77t | 87/77r |
| Montgomery, Ala. | 93/76t | 83/74t |
| Myrtle Beach, S.C. | 87/78s | 87/78t |
| Nags Head, N.C. | 82/70s | 83/73t |
| Nashville, Tenn. | 90/75pc | 87/72t |
| Newark, N.J. | 86/72pc | 88/72pc |
| Norfolk, Va. | 86/70pc | 87/73pc |
| Oakland, Calif. | 75/57s | 76/56s |
| Oklahoma City | 103/72t | 94/65s |
| Omaha, Neb. | 82/63t | 85/64s |
| Palm Springs, Calif. | 118/89s | 119/91s |
| Pittsburgh | 86/65s | 85/69pc |
| Portland, Maine | 79/61pc | 78/66pc |
| Portland, Ore. | 87/62s | 75/56pc |
| Providence, R.I. | 81/64sh | 82/66pc |
| Raleigh, N.C. | 91/70pc | 91/73c |
| Rapid City, S.D. | 89/61pc | 98/68s |
| Reno, Nev. | 103/65s | 104/62s |
| Richmond, Va. | 88/68s | 88/70c |
| Rochester, N.Y. | 84/64pc | 84/68t |
| Sacramento, Calif. | 98/60s | 100/62s |
| San Antonio | 99/78pc | 98/80t |
| San Jose, Calif. | 83/59s | 87/62s |
| Savannah, Ga. | 94/76s | 91/74t |
| Shreveport, La. | 98/78t | 97/74t |
| Sioux Falls, S.D. | 76/61t | 86/61s |
| South Bend, Ind. | 84/67t | 72/66t |
| Spokane, Wash. | 92/66s | 88/50w |
| Springfield, Mo. | 93/65t | 77/64pc |
| Springfield, Ill. | 77/68t | 75/63t |
| St. Louis | 83/70t | 76/67t |
| Syracuse, N.Y. | 85/63pc | 88/70t |
| Tallahassee, Fla. | 90/75t | 86/75r |
| Tampa, Fla. | 88/79t | 88/79r |
| Topeka, Kan. | 88/65pc | 85/63s |
| Tucson, Ariz. | 110/84s | 111/86t |
| Tulsa, Okla. | 101/70t | 90/68pc |
| Wichita, Kan. | 97/68s | 90/66s |
| Wilmington, Del. | 87/68s | 87/70pc |
| Winston-Salem, N.C. | 87/68s | 87/71pc |

**pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **c** Cloudy **t** Thunderstorms **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow

## EXTREMES

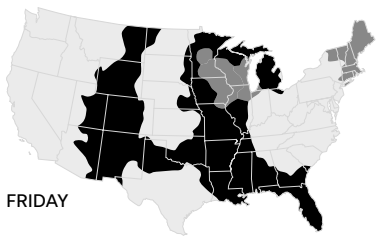
Note: For contiguous 48 states through Wednesday

**HOTTEST: 116°** Death Valley, Calif.

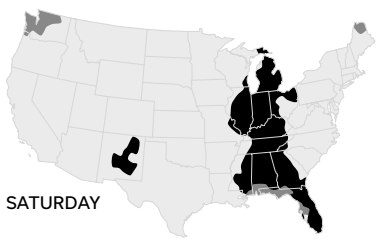
**COLDEST: 36°** Truckee, Calif.

## PRECIPITATION FORECAST

T-storms Rain Snow Ice/mix

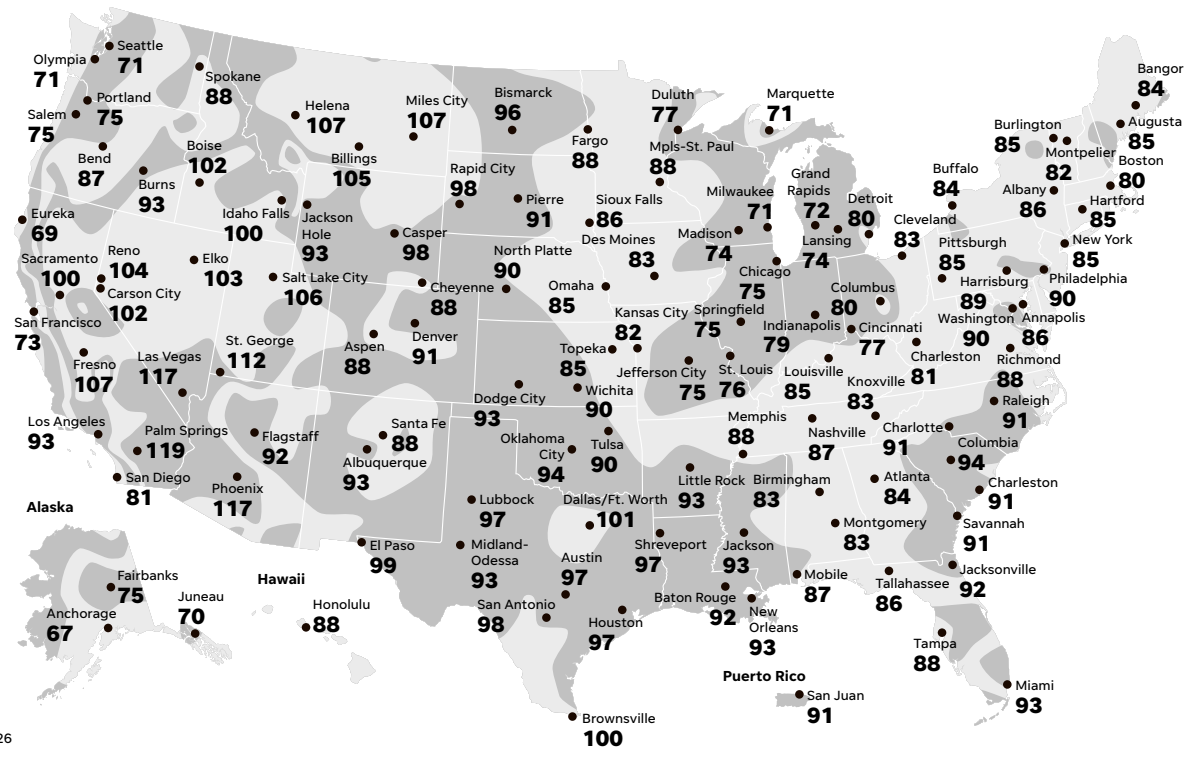


FRIDAY



SATURDAY

## SATURDAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES

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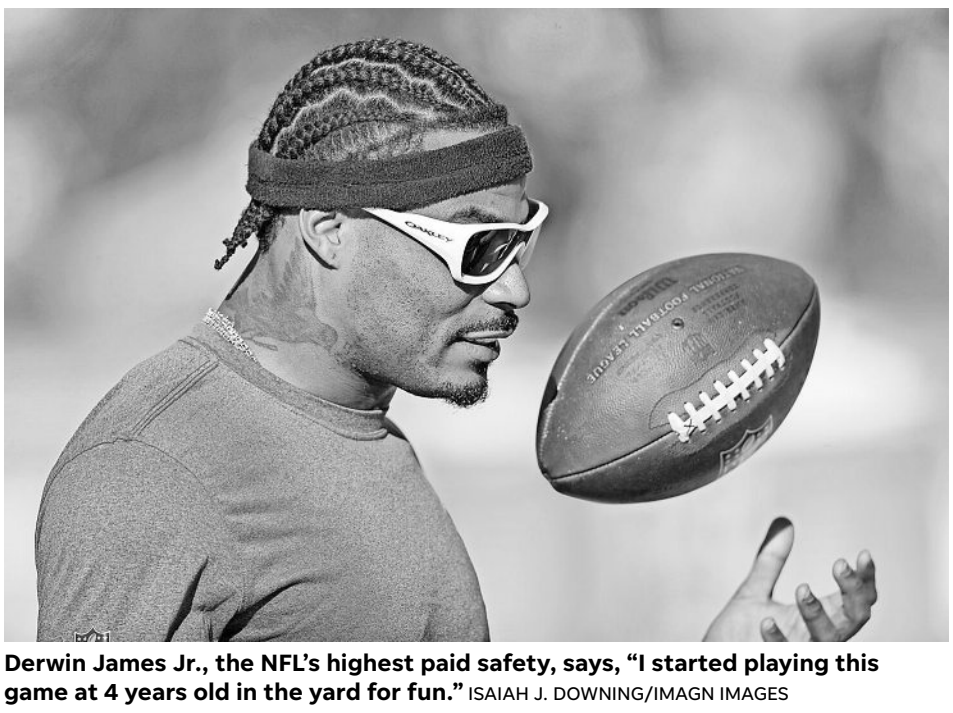
NFL

# Chargers' well-paid James 'hungry'

**Tyler Dragon**
USA TODAY


**Derwin James Jr., the NFL's highest paid safety, says, "I started playing this game at 4 years old in the yard for fun."** ISAIAH J. DOWNING/IMAGN IMAGES

EL SEGUNDO, CA – Three multiyear contracts with a single team is rare in today's NFL. Becoming the highest-paid player at a position twice is even more of an oddity. Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James is cognizant he's in rarefied air.

"I started playing this game at 4 years old in the yard for fun. I never thought (and) I could have never imagined I would be paid a third time like this," James told USA TODAY Sports in an exclusive interview. "But I'm still working, man. I'm still hungry, man, and I'm not satisfied."

The Chargers signed James to a third contract in May, a three-year, $75.6 million extension that made him the NFL's highest-paid safety for the second time in his career. The nine-year veteran has become one of the preeminent safeties in the NFL since the Chargers drafted him 17th overall in 2018 out of Florida State. He's a five-time All-Pro selection, including a first-team All-Pro nod in 2018, and a five-time Pro Bowler.

James has been a versatile defensive force on the Chargers despite multiple regime and roster changes.

Jim Harbaugh, the Chargers third full-time head coach since James was drafted, tabbed James the best safety he's ever seen.

"I've called him the best safety I've ever seen in the history of the National Football League. I don't think I'm going out on a limb," Harbaugh said of James last year. "He is one of the most incredible players I've ever watched."

### 'Superman out there'

James is part of a new evolution of safeties who play all over the field. This versatile group of safeties includes Baltimore's Kyle Hamilton, Seattle's Nick Emmanwori and James, who line up at various spots on the gridiron on any given snap.

According to Pro Football Focus, James was tracked at box safety, free safety, slot corner, wide corner and even the defensive line last year.

Harbaugh labeled James as a "six-tool" player.

"He can cover (and) he can play any position in the secondary. I guess what jumps out the most is he can play nickel, he can play dime backer, he could play corner, he could play in the deep half, he can play in the deep middle (and) he can blitz," Harbaugh said of James last season. "You have to compare him to Willie Mays at that point. He's a five-tool, six-tool secondary player. It's incredible what he can do. He does it all.

"It's like Superman when he puts on the armor, when he puts on that suit and wears that No. 3. He's donning the cap. He's a Superman out there."

The Willie Mays and Superman comparisons are apropos considering the Chargers have labeled James "the heart and soul" of their defense.

James has amassed 684 tackles, 40 tackles for loss and 19 sacks in his career, making him one sack shy of being just the third NFL player to reach 600 tackles, 40 tackles for loss and 20 sacks within the first 100 games of a career since the data was tracked in 2008. He's produced the most quarterback pressures (65) and sacks (15.5) among defensive backs over the last five seasons, according to NFL Research.

"I'm just trying to work my butt off every day to uplift that," James said of Harbaugh's praise. "To make people like him right. That makes those type of comments where people are not scratching their head, like, 'Man, what did he say? Is he crazy?'

"I want to be able to put the pressure on myself to be able to go out there and perform and consider myself one of the greats."

James anchored the Chargers defense that finished top five in total defense last year and was No. 1 in scoring defense in 2024.

"What he's done the last couple years, he's been an All-Pro slot corner, nickel, however you want to say it," Chargers defensive coordinator Chris O'Leary said. "You want 11 Derwin James. If you're going to put a scale to what he's best at, he's the best at that, blitzing, owning the perimeter. He's to me the best in the world at doing that."

### 'I'm the best safety'

James hopes to be a Charger for life and yearns to be considered one of the greats. He already believes he's the top player at his position.

"I don't take the field not feeling like I'm the best safety in the NFL," James said.

James, who turns 30 in August, knows what eludes him thus far is team success. He's been part of just one playoff win as a Charger.

The Chargers have won 11 games in each of the last two seasons while earning playoff berths and have made three postseason appearances since 2022. But an epic 27-point meltdown, a four-interception performance from Justin Herbert and an offensive no-show have marred the Chargers' three most recent playoff exits in the wild-card round.

"Once we get past that first round, I feel like the sky gonna be the limit for us," James said. "We're gonna roll, man. I feel like every year this team is in a prime position, an 11- or 12-win team."

Los Angeles is a championship-driven city spoiled by titles. The Dodgers have nine World Series titles and are chasing a three-peat, the Lakers have 17 NBA championship banners, including one in 2020, while the Rams won Super Bowl 56 and are a prohibitive favorite to capture Super Bowl 61.

Meanwhile, the Chargers are one of 12 teams to have never won a Super Bowl.

That's why James enters his ninth season with the Chargers focused on establishing a championship culture and assisting the franchise on a mission to get to the pinnacle of the sport.

"If I could win the Super Bowl," James said. "I've been paid three times, I made five Pro Bowls, five All-Pros. I've done all the single accolade things, I feel. But the team goal. … This team has never won a Super Bowl."

*Follow USA TODAY Sports' Tyler Dragon on X @TheTylerDragon*

# Plum landing spots if traded by Sparks

**Mitchell Northam**
USA TODAY

All signs point to WNBA superstar Kelsey Plum being on the trading block as the league's deadline for deals approaches.

The Athletic reported earlier this week that the 31-year-old five-time All-Star does not intend to re-sign with the Los Angeles Sparks this offseason when her one-year contract expires. The Los Angeles Times also reported that the plan is for the Sparks to move Plum before the deadline.

A 2021 Sixth Player of the Year Award winner, Plum has proved to be one of the most talented scoring guards in the WNBA and over the last two seasons with the Sparks has established herself as someone who can carry an offense.

Despite battling some injuries this year, Plum is averaging a career-best 23.9 points per game, which is second in the league to only her former teammate, A'ja Wilson of the Las Vegas Aces.

Plum is also posting a career-best 6.4 assists per game, which is sixth in the WNBA.

Before joining the Sparks, Plum helped the Aces win a pair of championships. In 2022, she was the All-Star Game MVP and was named to the All-WNBA first team.

In college at Washington, she set the NCAA career scoring record before it was broken by Caitlin Clark.

If Plum is indeed on the trade market, there should be several teams vying for her services. One thing that will be a hurdle for many buyers is her hefty contract of $999,999. Only so many teams have the cap space to absorb Plum.

With that, here's a few landing spots that make sense:

### Golden State Valkyries

The Valkyries are the team that would have to do the most gymnastics with their cap to make a deal for Plum work, but they are arguably the team that needs her the most. While Golden State has the WNBA's third-best record and – by many metrics – the league's top defense, it could really use a scorer of Plum's caliber. The Valkyries are last in field-goal percentage, 13th in points per game and 12th in points per scoring attempt.

Unfortunately, the Valkyries have no cap space. To make a deal for Plum work, Golden State will have to assemble a package that looks something akin to Juste Jocyte, Kayla Thornton and perhaps a few draft picks.

Is that a deal that's going to be enticing enough for the Sparks?

Will Golden State be willing to part with that much if there's no guarantee Plum will sign there long term?

It's hard to know.

But on paper, adding a scorer like Plum to the Valkyries would make them look like a legitimate championship contender.

### Washington Mystics

The Mystics are in the driver's seat to grab the eighth and final playoff spot. Sonia Citron, Kiki Iriafen and Shakira Austin are emerging as one of the best trios in the league. But Washington ranks 12th or worst in several offensive categories, including points per game, 3-point percentage, points per scoring attempt and percentage of points from 3-point land. Needless to say, the Mystics could use a gifted offensive veteran like Plum.

Washington has plenty of cap space to absorb Plum and also has a few young players and draft picks to put together what could be an enticing package for the Sparks. Perhaps a deal that includes Georgia Amoore and UCLA product Angela Dugalić could work.

### Portland Fire

The Fire have the most cap space available of any team in the WNBA at over $2 million. Taking in Plum's contract won't be a problem. The question is, do the Fire have anything that would be of interest to the Sparks in return for Plum?

Pairing Plum up with Bridget Carleton could make the Fire one of the most dangerous 3-point shooting teams in the league and perhaps kickstart them on a run in the second half of the season that puts them in contention for the final playoff spot.

**UCLA Bruins quarterback Nico Iamaleava calls out a play during the spring game at the Rose Bowl.** KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

# UCLA coach reveals how easy it was to keep QB

**Jordan Mendoza**
USA TODAY

Even after a rough first season at UCLA and a new coach coming in for the second year, quarterback Nico Iamaleava had no plans to leave the Bruins.

There was wonder if Iamaleava, who had a highly publicized departure from Tennessee to UCLA in spring 2025, would want a fresh start after the Bruins went 3-9, their worst record since 2018. After the Bruins hired Bob Chesney in December, the No. 1 task he undertook was trying to keep his quarterback. Chesney succeeded as Iamaleava didn't enter the transfer portal.

Chesney was asked at The Big Ten Media Days on July 29 about how he was able to keep the polarizing signal-caller as he enters his first season in Westwood.

It turns out, there wasn't much convincing he had to do.

"It started with retaining Nico, obviously, when we got here," Chesney said. "I think for Nico, and he can speak on, you know, on his own behalf, but I'll let you know just to add a little color to it, he did not want to go anywhere. This is where he wanted to be. This is where he wanted to play."

The coach added factors like being from Southern California and his younger brother, Madden, also being on the squad played a role in wanting to stay, which were things Iamaleava had consistently said were reasons he chose to transfer to UCLA after a reported name, image and likeness fallout at Tennessee.

With the desire to stay, Chesney said the next phase was making sure he was on the same page with the incoming coaching staff. Now, it's about helping him take that next step in what could be his final season of college football.

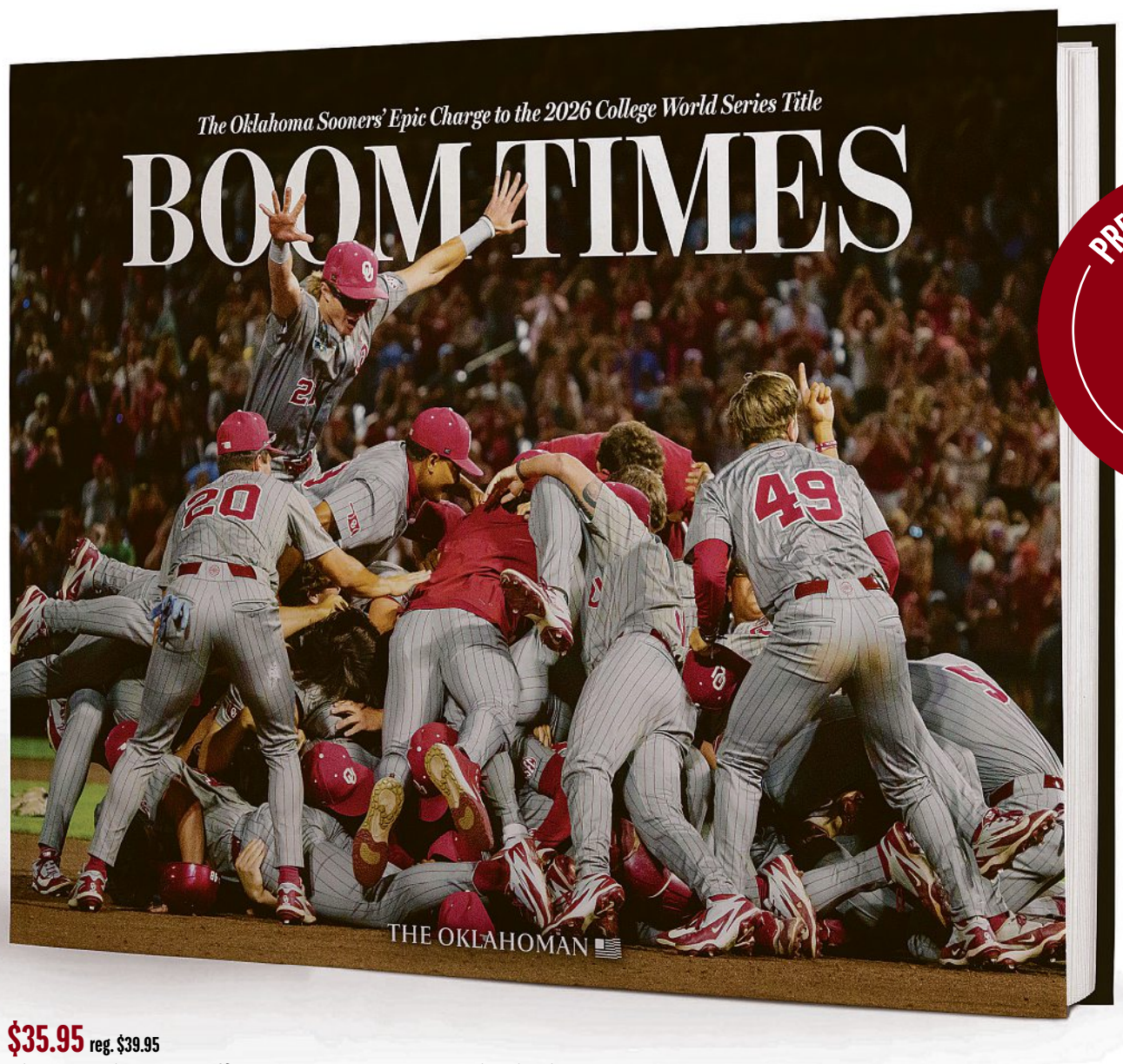
"I just love the growth he's had as a leader," Chesney said. "To watch him just grow and run with this and flourish at this moment as the leader, he was unanimously voted the leader of our football team when we voted our leadership council. He was at the top by a large margin, and that just speaks to the way he carries himself on a day-to-day basis. We're going to need him to be really, really good on Saturdays as well."

Iamaleava threw for 1,928 yards and 13 touchdowns with seven interceptions in 11 games last season while leading the Bruins in rushing yards (505), carries (112) and rushing touchdowns (4).

UCLA opens the season at California in Week 1 on Sept. 5.

# CHAMPS!

## The Sooners' CWS championship season in a hardcover collector's book

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They weren't supposed to win it all. They barely made the NCAA Tournament after a 14-16 record in the brutal SEC. But the Sooners caught fire and didn't stop burning until they captured the College World Series for the third time. In one of college baseball's greatest Cinderella stories, the Sooners finished on an 11-2 tear, outscoring their foes 118-53. From the walk-off home run that eliminated Georgia Tech to the 13-2 trashing of Kansas to the five homers that ousted Georgia to the 13-2 wipeout of North Carolina, Skip Johnson's squad left no doubt which team deserved the CWS mountaintop.

"BOOM TIMES: The Oklahoma Sooners' Epic Charge to the 2026 College World Series Title" is an exclusive hardcover collector's book capturing every clutch moment of the greatest season in Sooners history, told by the award-winning journalists at The Oklahoman. Preorder now and own the thrilling story!

Preorder online at

## Sooners.ChampsBook.com

THE OKLAHOMAN

USA TODAY WEEKEND EXTRA

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2026 | **SECTION D**

# Retreat effect

ILLUSTRATION BY TRACIE KEETON/USA TODAY; AND GETTY IMAGES

## Healthful food, movement and mindfulness fuel personal journeys and relaxation at South Carolina wellness resort

**Eve Chen** USA TODAY

HILTON HEAD, SC – There's a term in my extended family for when you've eaten so much that you have to sit back at a 45-degree angle. It's called "Eve-ing," my natural state after any big meal. • In truth, I'm sedentary most of the time – eating breakfast and lunch at my desk while working, spending evenings on the couch. • I know it's not good for me, but "it becomes easy living easy," as Holly Toelke, fitness manager at Hilton Head Health, told me during a recent stay at the all-inclusive wellness resort in South Carolina.

**Eve Chen says she's seen family members practice tai chi but never tried it herself until visiting Hilton Head Health in South Carolina.** EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

A growing number of travelers have turned to wellness destinations to help improve or maintain their wellbeing. According to data from the nonprofit Global Wellness Institute and analysis by travel research experts PhocusWright and its sister company Web in Travel, the wellness tourism market has more than doubled in size from $438 billion in 2012 to $894 billion in 2024. It's projected to hit $1.4 trillion by 2029.

I didn't know what to expect when I arrived at my first wellness retreat. I imagined a rehab or one of the religious retreats I'd been on, where everyone moves through prescribed activities together.

There are specific seminars for guests taking part in Hilton Head Health's GLP-1 Support program or longevity-focused Blue Zones Experience, but mostly, guests pick and choose what they want to do from a slate of daily offerings. They can also use the resort's equipment and facilities on their own when classes aren't in session.

On my first full day there, I chose an hour-long aqua exercise class, a 45-minute yoga class, three workshops totaling 2.5 hours and an hour-long cooking demonstration. Without the usual responsibilities and distractions of home, I still had time and energy for a 3-mile bike ride to and from the beach, 30 minutes

**See HILTON HEAD, Page 6D**

### Inside

**Trendy treatments:** Reporter tries them and finds that some surprised her. **2D**

**Repeat customers:** Travelers share why they repeatedly focus their vacations on wellness. **3D**

**10 best:** Readers' Choice award winners for U.S. wellness centers. **4D**

**GLP-1 retreats:** There's a lot to consider with these medications, and this resort's program lays it all out. **5D**

Hawaii retreat challenges reporter's ideas about recovery, longevity and whether treatments such as cryotherapy are effective

# Seeking wellness

**In hyperbaric chambers, such as the one at Bamford Wellness Spa in Hawaii, you breathe in 100% oxygen, helping to regenerate tissues and decrease inflammation.** PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ANNE MENKE/1 HOTEL HANALEI BAY

**Kathleen Wong** USA TODAY

KAUAI, Hawaii – The nerves were setting in that I was about to step into a minus 140 degree Fahrenheit cryotherapy chamber. For reference, the naturally coldest place on Earth is an uninhabited high ridge on the East Antarctic Plateau that can drop to negative 133.6 degrees. ● I was instructed to put on goggles, booties, gloves and a gaiter, and to tuck all my hair into a beanie otherwise it'd freeze solid. I also removed all my jewelry so it wouldn't give me frostbite. ● The freezing cold quickly surrounded me. I stood there in shock in my shorts and tank top as frost circulated inside the chamber, which was akin to standing in a high-tech but tiny broom closet. I lasted two minutes before leaping to the safety of a fluffy robe.

Getting blasted with extreme cold for a short period of time may seem bizarre to some, but it's a burgeoning recovery method for athletes, with some scientific evidence suggesting it reduces inflammation and muscle soreness. A 2023 study of 41 participants found four sessions of cryotherapy effective in treating chronic back pain.

My cryotherapy session was part of a new wellness retreat offering at 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay, a sustainable luxury resort set along Kauai's stunning north shore and the 1 Hotel brand's flagship property. These trips go beyond just hitting the spa and gym at your hotel; they're aimed at jump-starting your wellness journey for long-term lifestyle changes.

"A lot of times we're getting guests from the hustle and bustle, and they don't know how to turn off," said Punahele Kualii, 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay's spa director. "I'm the same way. ... Sometimes I don't know how to turn off, but when you do, you get that sense of really understanding that relaxation portion and really going home with some different types of wellness strategies."

Launched in April, the four-night retreats are designed to revitalize guests through a tailored itinerary of scientifically backed wellness therapies and inspiration from Kauai's natural beauty. Some would say the island is healing in its own right, and the property takes advantage by calling itself "nature's wellness sanctuary." It's tough to argue with that when it overlooks the ocean fronting a lush mountain range decorated with cascading waterfalls.

In an era of burnout and doomscrolling, more travelers are prioritizing their well-being in their trips, with a 150% surge in #wellnesstravel on TikTok, according to Kayak's 2026 trends report. In the report, 66% of Gen Z and millennial respondents said a "mental reset" is their biggest reason for traveling, and 37% desire a spa or wellness treatments.

Here's what it's like to experience a wellness retreat in Hawaii.

**1 Hotel Hanalei Bay, a luxury wellness resort in Kauai, Hawaii, gives guests a well-rounded and personalized experience, including fitness coaching.**

### Personalized focus on wellness

1 Hotel Hanalei Bay offers four types of wellness retreats, each designed to help guests reach different health goals and based off the four elements: *honua*, or earth, for athletic performance; *ahi*, or fire, for revitalization; *wai*, or water, for renewal; and *makani*, or wind, the option to build your own.

The *ahi* retreat caught my eye for its focus on improving vitality. While I consider myself an active person who surfs almost daily, I also struggle with chronically poor sleep and recovery. So having some extra energy and learning how to take better care of my body sounded enticing.

> **"A lot of times we're getting guests from the hustle and bustle, and they don't know how to turn off."**
>
> **Punahele Kualii**
> Spa director at
> 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay

Every retreat kicks off with a pre-departure call with the spa manager to discuss personal goals and preferences. From there, the resort builds an itinerary of traditional spa treatments, science-backed therapies like cryotherapy, mindfulness experiences like meditation sessions, and fitness coaching.

Upon arrival, I jumped into a DEXA scan to get a snapshot of my body composition's starting point. I learned my body fat and muscle but also health factors I rarely think about, like my bone density, which is important for longevity because our bones weaken as we age. Guests can also do a VO2 Max test to learn their cardio fitness and endurance capacity.

Throughout my stay, I had daily check-ins with 1 Hotel's wellness team, whether the spa director or a body architect – who are certified personal trainers – to discuss how I was feeling after each day. It was personalized to my own goals and routine, like how to improve my balance for surfing and incorporate more meditation for better sleep.

This type of in-depth customization is what travelers are looking for. In Booking.com's 2026 travel predictions, 71% of travelers said they're interested in body movement analysis or a personalized exercise routine to improve their

**See KAUAI, Page 3D**

## Do wellness treatments really work?

During my retreat, I experienced four touchless therapies under the premise that they'd recharge my body. To see how effective they are, I spoke with Dr. Annu Navani, chief medical officer for longevity clinic Reve Health Institute in California, and Dr. Leslie Copeland, a board-certified internal medicine doctor specializing in wellness and longevity medicine.

### 1. IV infusion therapy

I sat for about 40 minutes while a mix of vitamins and minerals, such as magnesium and B12, flowed into my arm, meant to hydrate and energize me. A 2025 academic review found that IV therapy offers some absorption advantages over oral supplements, especially when there's a true deficiency and when administered properly. According to Copeland, IV therapy can be helpful in the short term if someone is dehydrated or jet-lagged and needs an energy boost, but it depends on what's being infused to match their needs. Shortly after mine, I felt more balanced and had the best sleep of my trip that night.

### 2. Contrast therapy

The hotel offers two private rooms for contrast therapy, which is alternating between an infrared sauna and cold plunge. Blood vessels open with heat and close with cold, creating a "vascular pumping effect" that can help with lymphatic drainage, reduce muscle inflammation and improve circulation and blood flow, according to Navani. Copeland also provided positive feedback on contrast therapy, noting that cold plunges are more effective than cryotherapy at lowering body temperature. "The contrast is excellent, especially for recovery muscles, if you had a big workout, tendinitis, things like that," she said. I had been sore that day after pushing myself at the gym and felt some relief almost immediately. A 2024 scientific review found contrast therapy to have some benefits but limited evidence, and people with existing heart conditions could have adverse reactions.

### 3. Cryotherapy chamber

Standing in extreme cold for two to three minutes can cause vasoconstriction, which may help reduce inflammation and pain, according to Navani. While a few small studies show some benefits, it's unclear whether cryotherapy is more effective than an ice bath, according to a 2024 review of 28 randomized controlled trials. Afterward, I was more energized, possibly from the release of endorphins. People with high blood pressure or cardiovascular diseases might not be able to tolerate the extreme cold of cryotherapy, Navani added.

### 4. Hyperbaric chamber

Instead of breathing the usual 21% oxygen in the air, I was given nearly 100% oxygen through a nasal cannula while sitting in a spaceship-like pod for about 45 minutes. It was pressurized, like being in an airplane. Navani warned that having sinus congestion or a cold could make the pressure change uncomfortable. Consuming pure oxygen has been found to help regenerate tissues and regulate inflammatory responses, according to a 2021 scientific review. It's used to help patients heal wounds and conditions like autoimmune diseases. "All your tissues need oxygen," said Copeland. "We don't breathe in 100% oxygen, so when you're going from, you know, 80% to 100%, then it's a dramatic increase in your ability to repair. It stimulates new blood vessels, collagen production, healing time, decreased inflammation." While one session can help with recovery after a long flight or a tough workout, going regularly would yield the most benefits, she added. My session left me feeling a bit tired but also calmer for the rest of the day.

My itinerary stacked treatments to maximize benefits, with IV infusion therapy preceding a session in the hyperbaric oxygen chamber, on the idea that vitamins are better absorbed. However, Copeland said the order of treatments may not make a big difference in optimizing benefits.

Both doctors also emphasized that people respond differently to treatments, and it's important to communicate any medical complications in advance.

# Travelers are prioritizing wellness

## What they learn and how they feel draw them back, resort guests say

**Eve Chen**
USA TODAY

LaVina Jo Meyer, third from left, says she's made close friends during her trips to Hilton Head Health. Camaraderie shows among guests Audrey Coffey, Dean Price, Enzo Caiazzo, Eve Chen and Lala Ragimov. EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

HILTON HEAD, SC – Dean Price doesn't know if he'll still be able to walk in a decade.

He started losing muscle unexpectedly in the summer of 2018, and though he's undergone a battery of tests ruling out diseases like multiple sclerosis and ALS, he said, "Western medicine has no answer for me."

But a neurologist told him something life-changing: "'It really doesn't matter, any of it. Either you're going to be able to walk 10 years from now or you're not. We don't know. But what matters is that you figure out what you really, truly love to do in life and you do it, and you do it right now.'"

He's spending his summer doing just that, while continuing to focus on his well-being. In June, that led him to his first wellness retreat at Hilton Head Health, an all-inclusive wellness resort in South Carolina, which USA TODAY also visited.

Wellness tourism has exploded in recent years and is expected to become a $1.4 trillion industry by 2029, according to data from the nonprofit Global Wellness Institute and analysis by travel research experts PhocusWright and its sister company Web in Travel.

This year alone, more than half of the global respondents to Hilton's 2026 Trends Report identified "rest and recharge" as their top reason for travel. Additionally, Hilton noted more than a third of respondents cited improving their mental health as a key motivation for leisure travel, and 20% were seeking dedicated "me time."

Personal reasons for wellness travel vary as widely as the travelers themselves. Hilton Head Health staff say some guests come for stress relief and help finding balance. Others are working on their physical well-being or longevity. Still others are processing life changes like diagnoses, loss or milestones, including retirement.

### Time to reset

"I'm just very content coming here and resetting myself, renewing my spirit," said LaVina Jo Meyer, who was also there during Price's visit.

"I came here serendipitously because of a girlfriend's suggestion," she said of her first stay in 2023. She's visited seven times already.

Hilton Head Health stays start at just over $3,900 for a seven-night experience with a single-occupancy Comfort King room at the resort's on-site Sweetgrass Inn. Pricing varies by length of stay, time of year and choice of accommodations. Meyer knows visits are not for everyone but said it's how she's decided to spend her travel budget. "What keeps me coming back is it's a healthy place. It's an excellent environment. It's beautiful."

She loves the resort's location on Hilton Head Island, surrounded by moss-draped trees. She also enjoys the beach 1.5 miles away, where she takes morning walks during her stay. Research supports the mental and physical benefits of spending time in green spaces outdoors, but the biggest draw for Meyer is the experience at the resort itself.

She lauded the resort's supportive instructors and staff, healthy gourmet dining and array of daily activities, ranging from pickleball drills and yoga classes to workshops on living in the moment and breaking up with sugar.

"It helped me put in my mind healthy habits," she said. "Not like I didn't know what those were before, but they kind of just fell into place."

### Time to recommit

Enzo Caiazzo had a specific goal when he first visited Hilton Head Health in 2015: weight loss, which the resort has specialized in for nearly 50 years.

Learning about the importance of nutrition, practicing portion control and focusing on food quality at the resort, he said he saw results after a week.

It's important to note that not all wellness destinations deliver the benefits they may tout or guests may expect. And travelers should thoroughly research and read reviews on any destination they plan to visit.

However, Caiazzo said, "I was so satisfied about the results that I continued the same approach [at home], and the more I continued, the more results came."

He went on to lose nearly 40 pounds and said his doctor congratulated him, showing him results from blood tests before and after his transformation. "It's day and night."

> **"It's a community. ... You are on the same path, searching for something."**
>
> **Enzo Caiazzo**
> On the draw of staying at Hilton Head Health

Caiazzo has kept the weight off, but he still goes back to Hilton Head Health at least once a year to recommit. He met Price and Meyer on his latest visit.

"If you know this program, sooner or later you come back," he said. "I've been [to] other places, but I always come back here."

### Time to reconnect

Price has already gone back this summer.

"I absolutely, totally loved it. It gives me healthy eating, which was a big part of what I was trying to figure out – how do I travel and eat healthy?" he said, extolling the food, education and optional cooking demonstrations. He also enjoyed the myriad exercise and meditation classes, which built on what he was already doing on his own. "Every single day there was something available that I could do where I would push myself."

He said a big part of what was so fantastic was the people.

Meyer agreed, saying, "It feels like I make all these very close friends while I'm here." She's kept in touch with several she's met through the years.

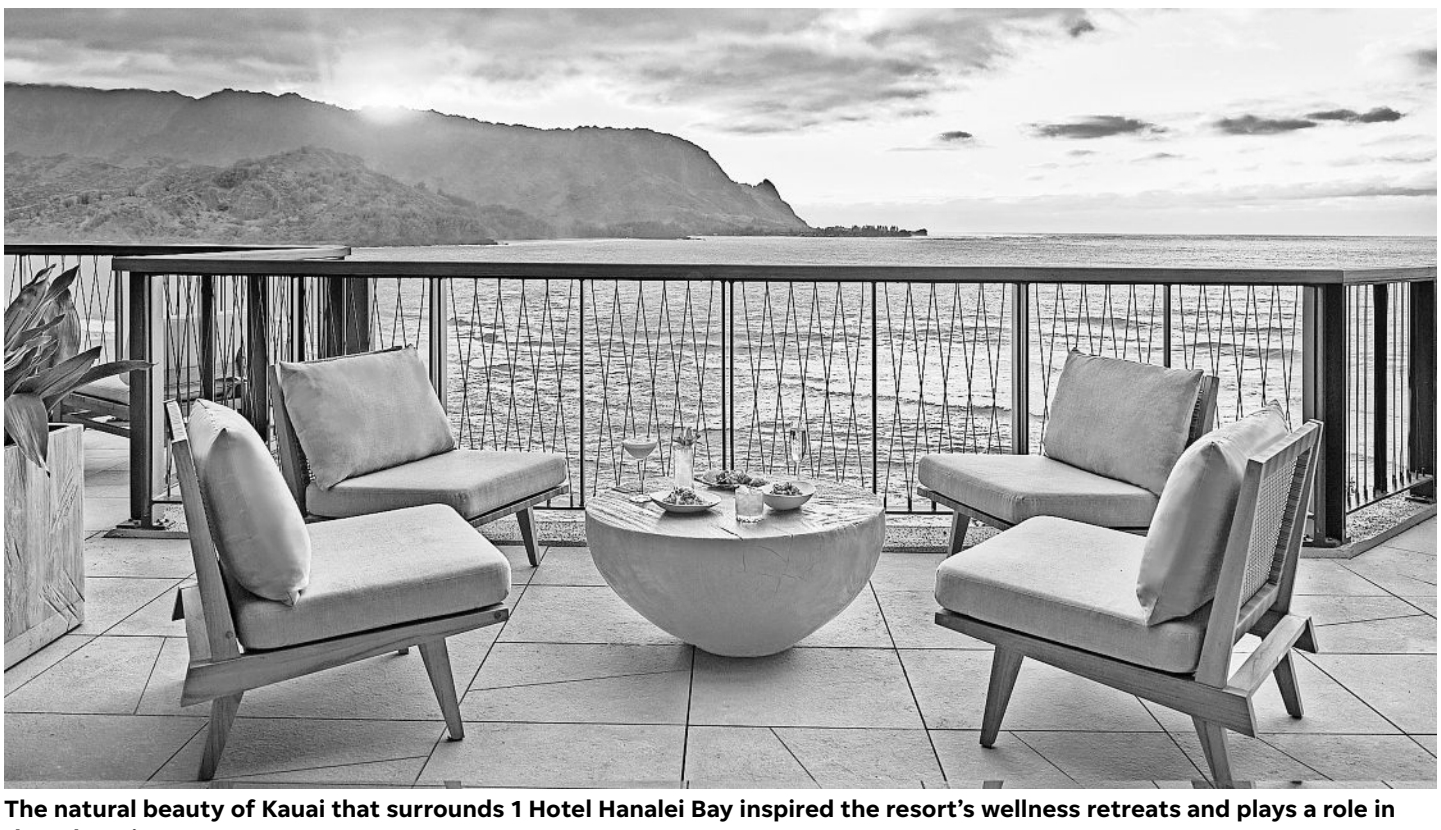
Even if they all have different reasons for going on the retreat, Caiazzo said, "It's a community. ... You are on the same path, searching for something."

Many guests who form friendships at the resort return year after year, together. Price thinks that's a great idea.

*USA TODAY reporter Eve Chen was provided access by Hilton Head Health. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.*

# Kauai

Continued from Page 2D



The natural beauty of Kauai that surrounds 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay inspired the resort's wellness retreats and plays a role in the relaxation aspect. PROVIDED BY 1 HOTEL HANALEI BAY

health and combat jet lag.

The resort's Bamford Wellness Spa, found across all 1 Hotel properties, was the anchor to my retreat. I also went to hotel partners Vitality Kauai, a locally owned on-site med spa, and Anatomy, the well-equipped fitness center, for some sessions.

### Is it worth a visit? An honest take

Although my results weren't drastic, I did notice improvements in my mood and post-workout recovery during the retreat and went home feeling overall recharged and pampered. Dr. AnnuNavani, chief medical officer for longevity clinic Reve Health Institute in California, approved the treatments set up for me, since everything was focused on reducing inflammation and increasing relaxation.

"So these, for the most part, help with natural recovery and adaptive mechanisms of your body," she said. "They help you feel rejuvenated."

For me, trying these four therapies was also a good introduction to see if they fit into my lifestyle back home.

"When you can help guide the guest to try something new that's out of their comfort zone, I think that's where it takes it to a whole different level," said Kualii.

Outside of the science-focused therapies, I had other relaxing experiences to round out the restorative part of my retreat. At the spa, I did an intuitive herbal ritual, which was a massage enhanced by local products like macadamia nut oil and heated noni leaves, a tropical plant used by Pacific Islanders for its antioxidant properties. I also had a one-on-one guided meditation of breathing exercises to help my mind slow down.

To make your health journey easier, the resort has an array of health-focused food and beverage offerings, including a smoothie bar, fresh local fruit set out in the morning and low-alcohol cocktails. (Of course, there were still desserts and pastries to indulge in.)

The biggest shift for me was mental. Before this, I had never been on a trip centered entirely on my well-being, and it was refreshing to focus on myself. The retreat made me think more deeply about what it means to be healthy – not just working out, but my longevity, mobility and mindfulness, too. I'm not sure I'll step into a minus-140 degree cryotherapy chamber again, but the retreat opened my mind up to a broader view of what it means to take care of myself, and I'm excited to continue the journey.

*USA TODAY reporter Kathleen Wong received access to this event from 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.*

# Readers pick top retreats

USA TODAY 10BEST

Imagine a place where tranquility meets transformation, where the serene beauty of nature blends with the nurturing care of wellness experts. Wellness retreats in the United States offer a sanctuary for those seeking to rejuvenate their mind, body, and spirit. ● These 10 centers – nominated by an expert panel and voted by readers as the best in the United States – provide personalized health recommendations, a diverse set of therapies and a range of activities designed to restore balance and promote long-term well-being.

### No. 10: The Ranch Malibu; Mailbu, California

The Ranch Malibu offers intensive programs lasting anywhere from six nights to multiple weeks. In order to eliminate decision fatigue, guests also receive a daily fitness routine featuring group hiking, yoga, and fitness classes in the spectacular hills above the Pacific Ocean. Healthful plant-based cuisine keeps your body nourished and fueled for the day's activities.

### No. 9: Omega Institute for Holistic Studies; Rhinebeck, New York

Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is a community-minded wellness retreat center in New York's Hudson Valley. Simple accommodations have no phones or TV; you'll spend your days eating whole-food meals, hiking forest trails, kayaking, playing lawn games, enjoying the sports court, or attending yoga, tai chi or meditation classes. The Institute also holds multiday, expert-led health and wellness workshops that cover everything from mindfulness and resilience to breathwork and aging.

### No. 8: Pritikin Longevity Center; Miami

Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami offers physician-led wellness retreats focusing on sustainable lifestyle changes. Programs include personalized fitness sessions, nutrition education and stress management classes. Guests enjoy luxurious accommodations, healthful gourmet meals and access to swimming pools and the beach. The all-inclusive experience is designed to promote long-term health improvements.

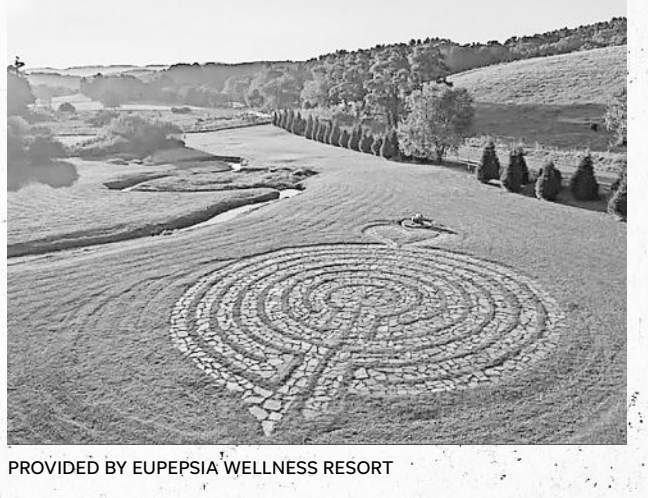
### No. 7: Stanford Inn by the Sea; Mendocino, California

Overlooking the Mendocino coastline, Stanford Inn by the Sea is a peaceful, vegan eco-resort centered on wellness, sustainability and nature. Guests can unwind with yoga, meditation and Ayurvedic spa treatments or explore the outdoors by canoe, bike or on foot. Comfortable rooms feature fireplaces and forest or ocean views, while Ravens Restaurant serves gourmet plant-based meals made with organic ingredients, many of which are grown on-site.

### No. 6: Carillon Miami Wellness Resort; Miami Beach, Florida

The Carillon Miami Wellness Resort is a haven for those who are seeking a holistic wellness experience. Situated on iconic Miami Beach, the resort boasts a comprehensive array of therapies and services, including a hydrotherapy circuit, skin care treatments and a variety of body rituals. Guests can rejuvenate with more than 65 fitness classes per week, enjoy the therapeutic benefits of four pools and relax in luxurious accommodations.

PROVIDED BY THE RANCH MALIBU



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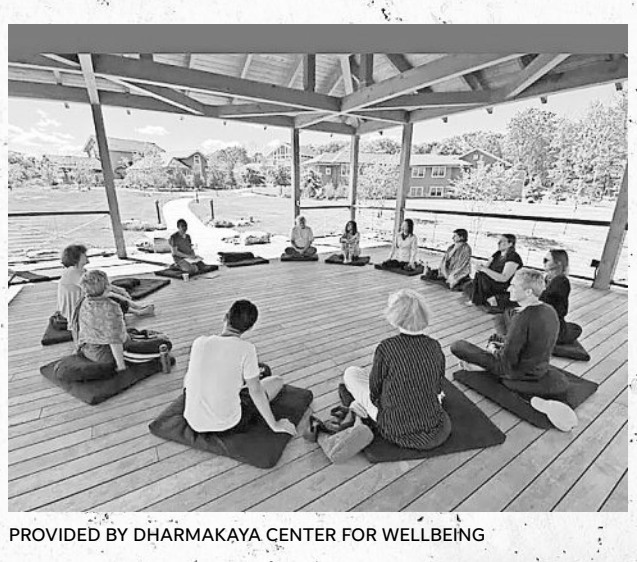


PROVIDED BY DHARMAKAYA CENTER FOR WELLBEING

### No. 5: Hilton Head Health; Hilton Head, South Carolina

If you're looking to avoid the overindulgence of your typical vacation, this wellness resort on Hilton Head Island may be your ticket to health and renewal. Choose from personalized Life Balance and Metabolic Health retreats, or stay for a couple of days to engage in fitness classes and outdoor activities while dining on nourishing gourmet cuisine. Enjoy healthy cooking demos and spa services, and chill in a hot tub or sauna.

### No. 4: Eupepsia Wellness Resort; Bland, Virginia

Eupepsia, situated on 256 stunning acres in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, is a wellness sanctuary that seeks to help guests achieve balance and wellness and reconnect with themselves through an integrated approach grounded in Ayurveda. Guests enjoy an immersive experience that includes vegetarian farm-to-table meals, health screenings and a range of therapies tailored to each individual.

### No. 3: Art of Living Retreat Center; Boone, North Carolina

Tucked into 380 acres of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, the Art of Living Retreat Center provides yoga, meditation, and Ayurvedic wellness programs. Fire circles, community singing, hiking and pottery classes also are offered. Guests have a number of room styles to choose from, including private hotel-style accommodations or a simple retreat room, and enjoy three vegetarian meals per day.

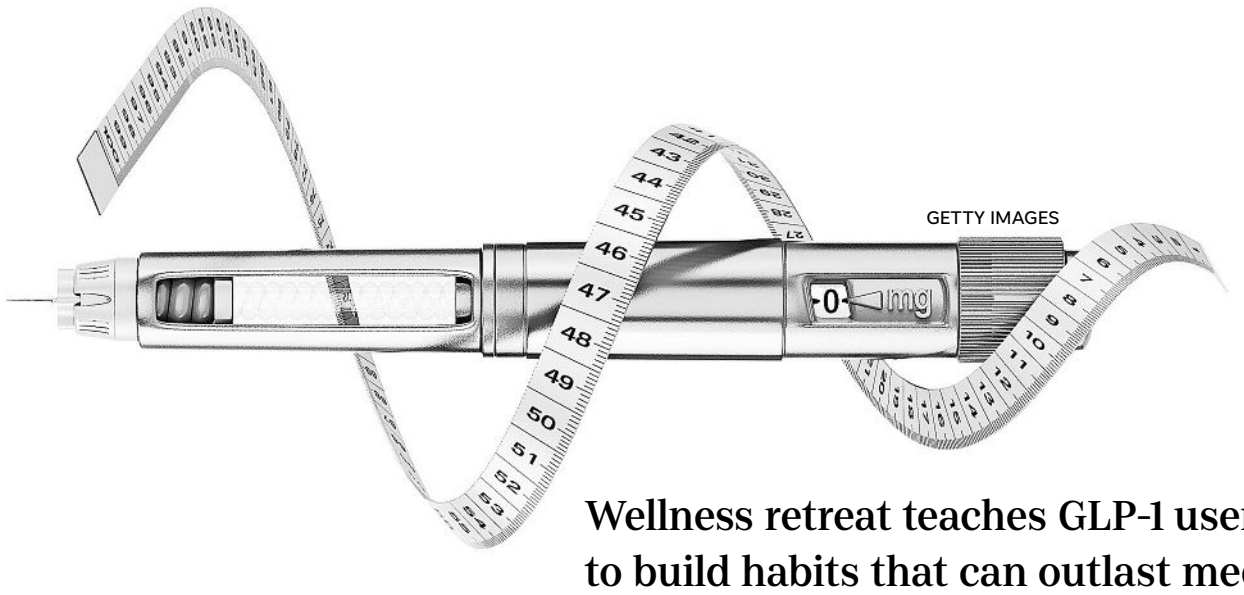
### No. 2: Skyterra Wellness Retreat; Pisgah Forest, North Carolina

Guests at Skyterra are encouraged to set aside the worries of day-to-day life and focus on health and well-being. Classes are small, giving each participant personalized attention, and all fitness levels are welcome. The resort hosts no more than 35 guests at a time to promote a sense of intimacy, exclusivity and a more individualized experience.

### No. 1: Dharmakaya Center for Wellbeing; Cragsmoor, New York

Empower your life with yoga, movement, meditation and spirituality, or deepen your practice with a range of Buddhist programs at this center for spiritual well-being. Simple accommodations are in residence halls surrounded by 90 acres of forest, and rates include three organic vegetarian meals daily. Art programs, from painting to dancing, help guests to gain insight and inspiration, and walking paths and outdoor meditation spaces allow guests to better appreciate the beautiful, peaceful surroundings.

GETTY IMAGES




GETTY IMAGES

Wellness retreat teaches GLP-1 users how to build habits that can outlast medication

# BEYOND THE SHOT

**Eve Chen** USA TODAY

HILTON HEAD, SC – Sitting around a relaxed classroom with a handful of other guests at Hilton Head Health Wellness Resort & Spa in South Carolina, I never would have guessed anyone was on or considering a GLP-1 medication. But there we were, gathered for an introductory class on the increasingly popular drugs. ● Nearly 3 out of 4 Americans older than age 19 are overweight, according to the National Center for Health Statistics' National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 2021 through 2023. That includes just more than 40% of U.S. adults who are considered obese.

For people who've struggled to lose weight, GLP-1 medications may seem like a lifeline, especially after seeing dramatic results from celebrities on such drugs as Wegovy or Zepbound, which are approved for weight loss, and other people on drugs including Ozempic and Mounjaro, which primarily treat diabetes.

But there are important factors to consider before starting the medications, while taking them and when considering discontinuation, all of which Hilton Head Health unpacks in a retreat USA TODAY learned about firsthand.

**Nutrition is one element of the GLP-1 Support program at Hilton Head Health. A dietitian recommends quality, unprocessed (or minimally processed) foods.** PHOTOS BY EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

**Guests are welcome to order as much food as they want at the retreat, with the only caveat being to eat mindfully.**

**A variety of infused waters and iced teas are available for guests to sip throughout their stay. Electrolyte packets also are available upon request.**

**Fitness is another element of the GLP-1 Support program. "A big component of any type of weight loss is to make sure that you still continue strengthening," says Holly Toelke, fitness manager at the resort.**

### Inside a GLP-1 retreat

The all-inclusive wellness resort primarily was geared toward weight loss when it opened nearly 50 years ago. It has evolved to embrace a more holistic approach to health, but many guests still are interested in losing weight, and some – including several people in my class – already have incorporated GLP-1 medications into their journeys.

Staff neither encourage nor discourage usage, leaving medical advice to doctors. However, they do explain how the drugs work, research-backed pros and cons, and, if people decide to use the drugs, "[how] to take them in a way that provides the best chance of long-term success," said Bob Wright, a longtime health educator at Hilton Head Health.

Select weeks of the year, the resort holds a GLP-1 Support program. It kicks off with the same introductory class I attended, but adds elements including:

- Individual body composition and metabolic assessment.
- Individual biomarker testing for inflammation, metabolic health and glucose regulation.
- Workshops on nutrition, strength and mindset.
- Group coaching discussions and small group strength training.
- All-inclusive accommodations and gourmet dining.
- Access to the resort's full range of facilities and programming.

### What to consider about GLP-1s

Holly Toelke, fitness manager at Hilton Head Health, encourages guests to try different types of exercise, "because what happens if you don't know that it's something you're going to potentially fall in love with?"

Strength training is important because muscle loss can be a side effect of GLP-1s, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Other potential side effects include gastrointestinal issues such as stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea and constipation.

When it's hard to eat, "relax a little, and you eat foods that you can tolerate," said Elizabeth Huggins, a registered dietitian, nutritionist and certified diabetes educator at Hilton Head Health. The rest of the time, she advises concentrating on quality, whole, plant-forward foods. "Definitely getting the things that you hear all the time, like adequate protein, adequate fluid, adequate fiber."

Learning the right way to eat and how to have a healthy relationship with food is especially important for GLP-1 users who hope to go off the medication. As Wright explains, the drugs suppress appetite at the biological, hormonal level, and "if you take away the hormonal control, then that hunger comes back."

Multiple studies have shown that people regain weight after stopping GLP-1 medications. Other people don't lose any weight at all, notes Anne Poirier, director of behavioral health at Hilton Head Health. "We don't always know what the weight's going to be at the end of a week, but the thing we have control over is our behavior," she said.

Poirier tries to help GLP-1 Support participants shift their thinking away from the scale or appearance and toward "what our body does for us every single day," a principle known as body neutrality. She also helps them craft and narrow a practical action plan for home.

Whatever guests decide to do with GLP-1 medications, Hilton Head Health hopes to equip them with lasting tools for wellness.

*USA TODAY reporter Eve Chen was provided access by Hilton Head Health. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.*

### GLP-1 bump

GLP-1 drug use has nearly quadrupled since 2024, according to Gallup's National Health and Well-Being Index. It found that roughly 11% of U.S. adults are taking them for weight loss in 2026, up from 3% in 2024.

Guests at the Hilton Head Health wellness resort in South Carolina can ride a rental bike or walk to the beach, which is a little more than a mile and a half away. A resort shuttle also offers rides every morning. PHOTOS BY EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

Quiet spaces for guests to relax or meditate are interspersed across the Hilton Head Health resort grounds.

# Hilton Head

Continued from Page 1D

on a treadmill and a long, leisurely dinner where I met the first of several new friends who made my experience extra memorable.

Doing nothing is fine, too. I met several guests who just rested. No one keeps tabs, other than staff checking that guests are enjoying themselves and have everything they need.

Some activities cost extra – like cooking classes, spa treatments, private lessons and select outings – but most things are included in the all-inclusive pricing, which starts at just over $3,900 for a seven-night experience with a single-occupancy Comfort King room at the on-site Sweetgrass Inn. Pricing varies by length of stay, time of year and choice of accommodations.

## Get moving

While guests may do as much or as little as they please, Hilton Head Health offers a few recommendations.

One is to take a short, leisurely thermal walk after every meal, to help boost metabolism instead of succumbing to a food coma, like I would normally.

Another recommendation is to try different types of movement and exercise. I already knew I'd love the yoga, but I also enjoyed a drum fit class where we pounded exercise balls with drumsticks to the beat of boisterous music, a TRX strength class where we used our body weight for resistance, and tai chi on the beach.

"We all can find something, some way to move that we enjoy, and that's what I think this place does so well," said Anne Poirier, director of behavioral health at Hilton Head Health.

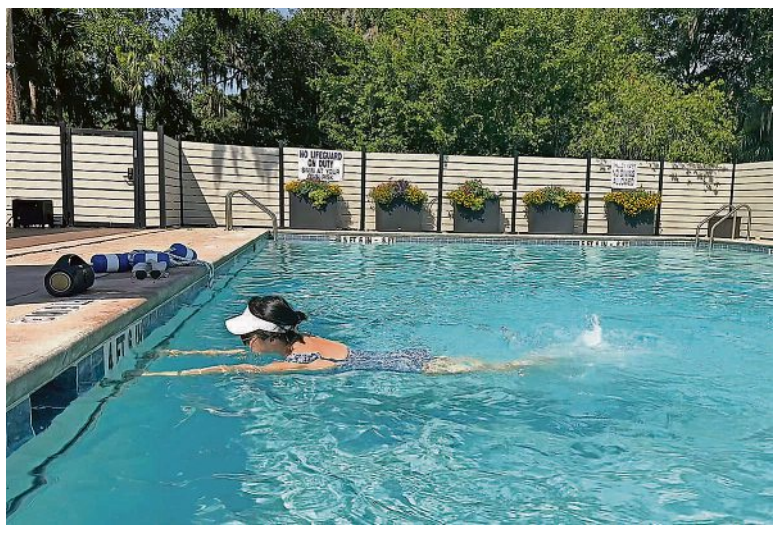
Instructors make sure everyone feels supported, no matter their level, and happily offer extra explanations and modifications as needed.

"We do have a variation of skills and abilities that do come through here," Toelke said. "Maybe you've had numerous knee surgeries or maybe your back; we do offer a pool. We do offer chair yoga for people that maybe can't move on the floor as easy."

Because everyone is focused on their own wellness journey, no one batted an eye when I chose the lightest possible free weights for an upper body sculpting class or stepped out of time in dance cardio.

"If anything, everybody's going to cheer you on, because we're all here for the same purpose of we want to get stronger, we want to get better, we want to learn," Toelke said.

Hilton Head Health offers two types of accommodations: rooms at its on-site Sweetgrass Inn, above, or private villas.



In addition to being easier on joints, aqua exercise classes are fun, reporter Eve Chen says.

**"If anything, everybody's going to cheer you on, because we're all here for the same purpose of we want to get stronger, we want to get better, we want to learn."**

**Holly Toelke**
Fitness manager at Hilton Head Health in South Carolina

## Eating well

Mealtimes are just as varied. Menus change every few days but always feature fresh, whole, plant-predominant foods. During my stay, options included street corn avocado toast for breakfast, ahi tuna sushi bowls for lunch, and garlic and herb beef kabobs for dinner, all with lots of veggies.

Everything was chef-made and tasty.

"It's got to taste good or people aren't going to keep eating it," said Elizabeth Huggins, a registered dietitian, nutritionist and certified diabetes educator at Hilton Head Health. "Prior to here, I've always been in a hospital setting, and I definitely did hear, 'Oh if it tastes good, spit it out,' which is sad. Or, 'If it's healthy, it's probably going to taste like cardboard,' and that's not true at all."

The resort makes it easy to make good choices, because there aren't any bad options.

Beverage selections are generally limited to water (flat, sparkling or infused), iced and hot tea, coffee, espresso drinks and V8.

Sugar and salt are only available by request, but Stevia and spices are kept on hand at the coffee station.

Dessert is only offered twice a week.

Between meals, guests are welcome to grab pre-portioned snacks like fresh fruit and veggies, nuts, yogurt, hard-boiled eggs and peanut butter hummus. I liked the latter so much, I asked for the recipe and made it as soon as I got home.

## Food for thought

Guests are also offered food for thought in workshops on topics like mindfulness, self-compassion over self-criticism, finding your why and how to get better sleep.

Poirier notes wellness is about a lot more than food and exercise. She helps guests connect the dots between thoughts, emotions and behavior and tries to set them up for continued progress when they leave.

"It's not all or nothing. I think that all-or-nothing mindset is diet culture," she said. "I use the term 'mostly sometimes.' … So, I mostly eat like this, and sometimes I have pizza. If we do it that way and we use quantity and frequency – how often and how much – we can really make it much more sustainable."

She says the same goes for movement.

"Can we divorce exercise from body shape and size and weight? Because our cultures put those two things together … then all of a sudden, exercise becomes a need to, should do, and that sometimes can impact some of the thoughts around it," she said. Instead of the old "no pain, no gain" adage, she suggested, "Let's just move. The best movement is the one you're going to do."

"Those are kind of the things we talk about here," she said. "Shifting the perspective of food and then the perspective of exercise and then finally the perspective of ourselves."

## Me time

I thought a lot about myself over my five-night stay and what I want my future to look like. I want to be healthy, agile and strong.

Our bodies naturally start losing muscle mass at age 30, with a 3%-5% loss every decade after that, according to the National Institutes of Health.

"It is our job and our responsibility to make sure that we keep it on," Toelke said. "Now that doesn't mean we have to body build all the time, but just incorporating a strength routine … anything you can do."

Knowing my time there was limited, I tried to do as much as I could, without overdoing it. Between all the exercise and healthy eating, I felt better than I had in years. It made me want to feel that way all the time.

Since returning home, I've indulged here and there but tried to keep at it: sticking to mostly unprocessed foods, looking more closely at nutrition labels and drinking more water. I haven't taken any fitness classes, but I've tried to move a little every day and just bought a resistance band to keep working on my strength. And there has been no "Eveing."

Baby steps, but it's a start.

"There's no right time to start a routine," Toelke said. "Better late than never."

*USA TODAY reporter Eve Chen was provided access by Hilton Head Health. USA TODAY maintains editorial control of content.*

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

Todd Blanche can continue to head the U.S. Justice Department as acting attorney general.
BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

# Blanche's bid in doubt

## Trump threatens to pull nomination for AG amid Senate standoff

**Richard Cowan, David Morgan and Dan Rosenzweig-Ziff**
REUTERS

President Donald Trump threatened on July 30 to withdraw until next year his nomination of Todd Blanche to serve as U.S. attorney general, escalating a standoff with Senate Republicans who have objected to a proposed "anti-weaponization" fund that could benefit his allies.

The dispute highlights Trump's weakening grip on a Congress controlled by his own party, but it does not affect the tenure of Blanche, who can continue to head the Justice Department as acting attorney general.

Republican Sens. John Cornyn and Thom Tillis have held up Blanche's nomination while seeking written assurances that the Justice Department will not set up the $1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" program. Trump critics have derided it as a slush fund to reward supporters with taxpayer money.

Cornyn and Tillis met with Blanche together for 45 minutes late in the afternoon on July 30 to try to salvage the confirmation vote, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two sides are working "collaboratively," are closer to an agreement and that Blanche answered questions about his proposed resolution.

Trump said on social media that he could withdraw Blanche's nomination and then renominate him next year after Cornyn and Tillis have left office. Trump also claimed credit for ending the careers of the two senators.

"Todd Blanche is a STAR, and everyone knows it! He has the potential to go down as one of the Greatest Attorney

See BLANCHE, Page 3NN

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, told reporters that negotiations were likely over until next week. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-North Carolina, announced his retirement last year after clashing with the president over Medicaid cuts. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

ANALYSIS

# Attack sparks concerns on Suez

## Risk seen at another energy choke point

**Jonathan Saul, Marwa Rashad and Ahmad Ghaddar**
REUTERS

LONDON – A drone strike that damaged two gas tankers in Egyptian waters has renewed energy security concerns about the nearby Suez Canal and a related pipeline, a vital export route for Saudi Arabian oil since the beginning of the Iran war.

Even as Iran and its Houthi allies have fired on tankers transiting the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, Egypt's Suez Canal and Sumed pipeline continued to offer safe, northbound export routes for Saudi Red Sea energy cargoes.

While no party has claimed responsibility for the July 29 attack on the tankers at Egypt's port of Damietta, which is located on a branch of the Nile Delta close to the Mediterranean, or publicly threatened the Suez Canal, the potential risk to the choke point has added to market concerns.

"The passage through the Red Sea, even via the longer Mediterranean route, could be put at risk, which threatens up to 5 million barrels per day of oil supply that can currently bypass the Strait of Hormuz," said Saul Kavonic, head of energy research at advisory company MST Marquee.

Hardly any tankers are passing through the Gulf's choke point at Hormuz, previously the route for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supply.

Saudi Arabia rerouted most of its oil to the Red Sea and its Yanbu terminal after the war began, but Houthi threats and attacks since last week have now stopped many tankers using that route.

A growing volume of Saudi oil, along with other shipping, has instead been heading north up the Red Sea toward Suez and the Sumed pipeline, according to data from Kpler, a market intelligence company.

For Asian customers that means a longer voyage around Africa instead of south via the Gulf of Aden.

Crude loadings from the pipeline, which crosses Egypt from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean port of Sidi Kerir, have risen to 28.79 million barrels in July from 19.52 million in April, before the Houthis' July 20 threat to prevent Saudi oil exiting via Bab el-Mandeb.

Around 30 ships have clustered around the Port Said anchorage at the canal's Mediterranean end compared to around 20 earlier this week, ship-tracking data on the MarineTraffic platform showed on July 30.

"We've seen a clear increase in crude/condensate tankers heading north after loading in the Red Sea,"

See SUEZ, Page 4NN

EXPLAINER

# Fauci could face charges after Senate hearing

## But experts say case would encounter hurdles

**Andrew Goudsward**
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Dr. Anthony Fauci could face criminal prosecution after refusing to answer more than 100 Senate questions about his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, setting up a confrontation with Republican lawmakers that could test the limits of congressional power to compel testimony.

Fauci, the former top U.S. infectious disease expert, testified this week before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee whose Republican chair, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, a longtime Fauci antagonist, has said he will call a vote to refer Fauci for contempt of Congress.

Fauci, who led the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and became the face of the U.S. pandemic response, has condemned Paul for what he has described as a campaign to have him imprisoned.

Here's a look at where the dispute stands and what could come next with Fauci:

### What is contempt of Congress?

U.S. law makes it a crime for anyone summoned to appear before Congress to refuse to hand over documents or answer questions.

Congress does not have the authority to initiate criminal prosecutions on its own so it instead refers potential cases to the Justice Department. A contempt referral must first be approved by a congressional committee and then by the full Senate or House of Representatives.

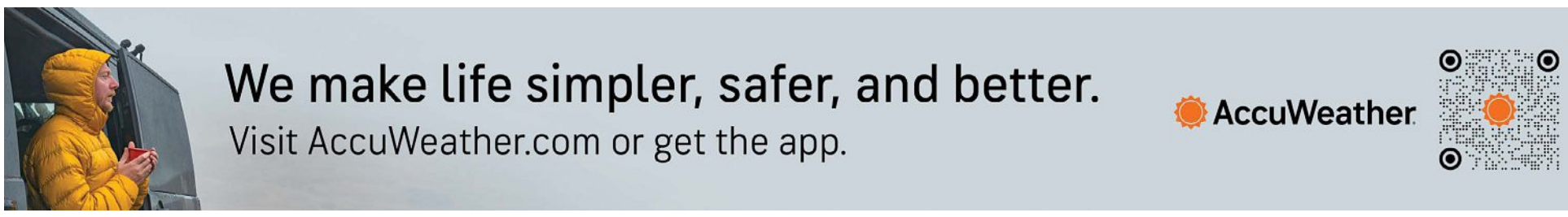
A referral for Fauci in this instance would likely need a 60-vote majority, which would require Democratic support in a closely divided 100-member Senate.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington then reviews the referral and decides whether to seek a criminal indictment before a grand jury. The office is run by Jeanine Pirro, a close ally of President Donald Trump.

### What will prosecutors have to prove?

Prosecutors would have to prove that Fauci willfully declined to answer

See FAUCI, Page 4NN

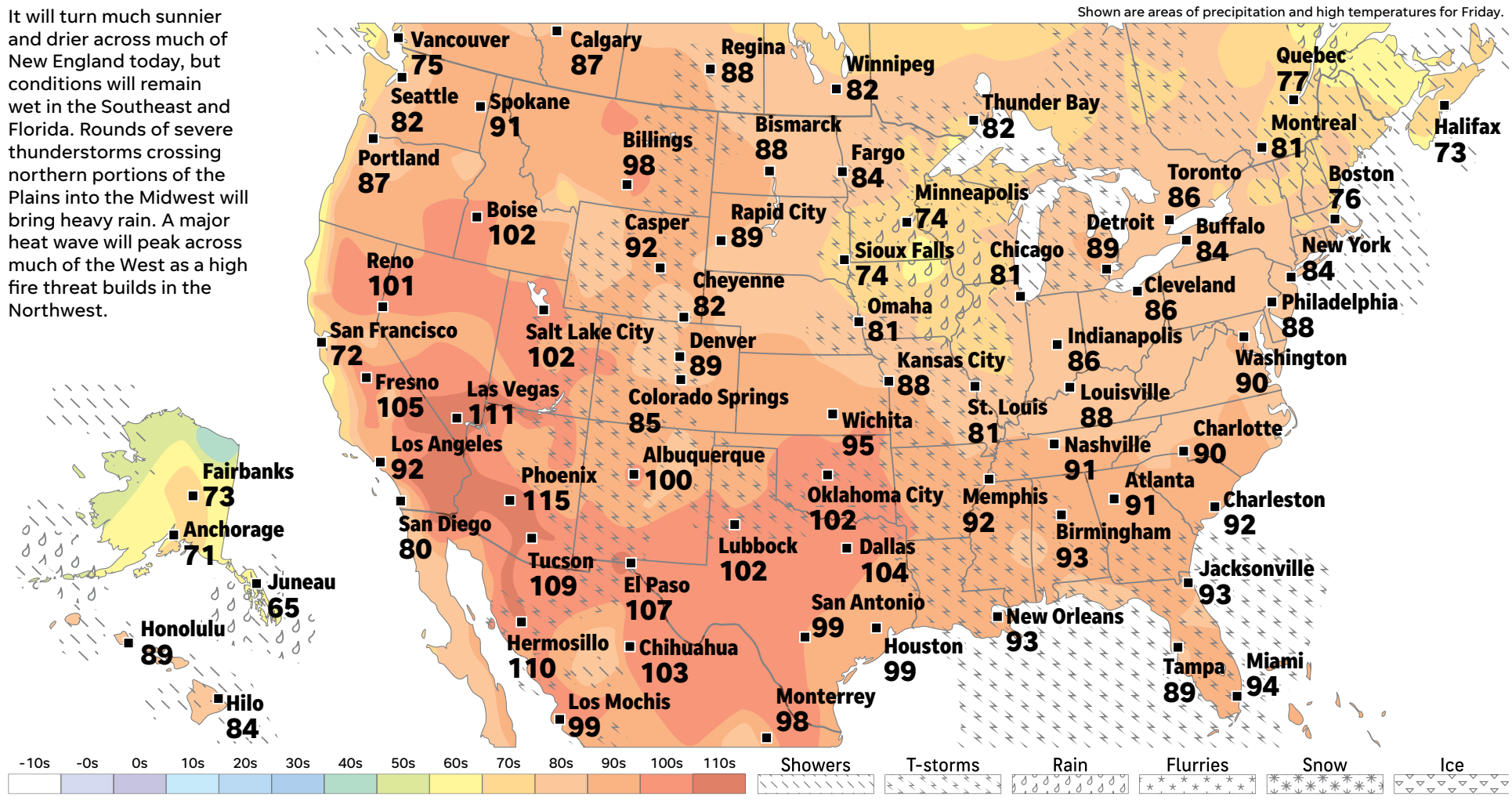



## NATIONAL SUMMARY

It will turn much sunnier and drier across much of New England today, but conditions will remain wet in the Southeast and Florida. Rounds of severe thunderstorms crossing northern portions of the Plains into the Midwest will bring heavy rain. A major heat wave will peak across much of the West as a high fire threat builds in the Northwest.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Friday.




## THURSDAY EXTREMES

**NATIONAL** (for the 48 contiguous states)

| | |
|---|---|
| **High:** | **115** at Needles, CA |
| **Low:** | **36** at Truckee, CA |
| **Precip:** | **2.77"** at Valentine, NE |

**INTERNATIONAL** (excludes Antarctica)

| | |
|---|---|
| **High:** | **121** at Omidieh, Iran |
| **Low:** | **10** at Balmaceda, Chile |
| **Precip:** | **4.88"** at Yangon, Myanmar |

## TODAY IN HISTORY

The temperature at Duluth, Minn., reached an all-time high of 106 degrees on July 31, 1936. This is hotter than has ever been recorded at Miami Beach, Fla., where being near the ocean causes high humidity but prevents extreme heat.

## WEATHER TRIVIA™

**Q:** What was the worst drought in United States history?

**A:** The 1930s dust bowl days in the central and southern Plains.

## NATIONAL CITIES FRIDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

| | High/low/W | Air Quality |
|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen, SD | 81/57/s | 45 |
| ● Abilene, TX | 103/76/s | 37 |
| Accomac, VA | 83/66/pc | 43 |
| ● Adrian, MI | 89/70/c | 75 |
| Akron, OH | 85/67/s | 75 |
| Alamogordo, NM | 108/75/t | 53 |
| Alexandria, VA | 90/70/s | 50 |
| Alliance, OH | 85/66/s | 75 |
| Amarillo, TX | 97/69/t | 75 |
| Ames, IA | 79/64/r | 75 |
| Anderson, SC | 91/70/s | 58 |
| ● Appleton, WI | 80/66/r | 75 |
| Asheville, NC | 85/63/s | 55 |
| Ashland, OH | 86/67/s | 75 |
| Athens, GA | 92/69/s | 51 |
| Augusta, GA | 94/72/pc | 54 |
| Austin, TX | 101/76/pc | 75 |
| Bartlesville, OK | 101/68/t | 60 |
| Battle Creek, MI | 85/67/t | 75 |
| Bedford, IN | 84/67/pc | 39 |
| Binghamton, NY | 80/61/pc | 50 |
| Bluffton, SC | 90/81/t | 71 |
| Bremerton, WA | 84/56/s | 37 |
| Brockton, MA | 79/62/pc | 25 |
| ● Brownwood, TX | 103/74/s | 36 |
| ● Burlington, IA | 76/67/r | 38 |
| Burlington, NC | 89/66/s | 51 |
| Burlington, VT | 82/65/c | 40 |
| Cambridge, OH | 87/64/s | 45 |
| ● Camdenton, MO | 90/67/t | 32 |
| Canandaigua, NY | 85/63/pc | 50 |
| Canton, OH | 86/67/pc | 75 |
| ● Carlsbad, NM | 106/76/s | 80 |
| Chambersburg, PA | 88/64/pc | 43 |
| Cherry Hill, NJ | 87/69/s | 60 |
| Cincinnati, OH | 87/70/c | 65 |
| Clarksville, TN | 88/74/pc | 50 |
| ● Coldwater, MI | 85/67/pc | 75 |
| Columbus, OH | 87/70/pc | 64 |
| Corning, NY | 85/56/pc | 42 |
| Corpus Christi, TX | 96/78/s | 75 |
| ● Daytona Beach, FL | 90/74/t | 75 |
| Deming, NM | 106/77/t | 55 |
| ● DeRidder, LA | 96/76/t | 53 |
| Des Moines, IA | 80/64/t | 75 |
| ● Detroit, MI | 89/70/c | 75 |
| Devils Lake, ND | 82/62/c | 33 |
| Dover, NH | 79/61/sh | 25 |
| El Paso, TX | 107/79/s | 75 |
| Elmira, NY | 85/58/pc | 36 |
| Erie, PA | 83/68/pc | 52 |
| Eugene, OR | 90/55/s | 25 |
| Evansville, IN | 84/71/pc | 75 |
| Fall River, MA | 80/64/pc | 25 |
| Farmington, NM | 100/70/t | 71 |
| Fayetteville, NC | 92/70/s | 55 |
| ● Fond du Lac, WI | 80/65/r | 75 |
| Fort Myers, FL | 91/79/t | 75 |
| Fort Smith, AR | 101/75/t | 47 |
| Framingham, MA | 80/61/sh | 25 |
| ● Freeport, IL | 74/64/r | 75 |
| Fremont, OH | 88/72/c | 64 |
| Fort Collins, CO | 92/60/t | 75 |
| Gadsden, AL | 91/73/pc | 46 |
| ● Gainesville, FL | 91/75/t | 75 |
| ● Galesburg, IL | 72/66/r | 75 |
| Gastonia, NC | 89/67/s | 71 |
| ● Glen Rose, TX | 104/74/s | 37 |
| Gonzales, LA | 93/78/t | 53 |
| Great Falls, MT | 96/59/pc | 78 |
| ● Green Bay, WI | 80/64/r | 75 |
| Greenville, SC | 90/67/s | 58 |
| Hackensack, NJ | 86/70/pc | 60 |
| Hagerstown, MD | 88/67/pc | 43 |
| ● Hattiesburg, MS | 93/76/t | 36 |
| Henderson, KY | 84/72/c | 75 |
| Hendersonville, NC | 83/63/s | 55 |
| Herkimer, NY | 84/59/pc | 28 |
| ● Hillsdale, MI | 86/67/pc | 75 |
| ● Holland, MI | 83/67/t | 75 |
| Hornell, NY | 85/60/pc | 42 |
| Houma, LA | 92/78/t | 53 |
| ● Howell, MI | 89/70/pc | 75 |
| Hutchinson, KS | 94/66/s | 37 |
| Hyannis, MA | 76/67/pc | 25 |
| Indianapolis, IN | 86/69/pc | 75 |
| ● Iowa City, IA | 75/66/r | 50 |
| Ithaca, NY | 83/57/pc | 50 |
| ● Jackson, MS | 93/77/t | 75 |
| ● Jackson, TN | 90/76/t | 40 |
| ● Jacksonville, FL | 93/75/t | 75 |
| Jacksonville, NC | 90/72/s | 55 |
| Kent, OH | 84/67/s | 75 |
| ● Kewanee, IL | 72/67/r | 75 |
| Keyser, WV | 88/64/pc | 41 |
| Kinston, NC | 91/69/s | 55 |
| Knoxville, TN | 87/70/pc | 51 |
| Lafayette, IN | 84/67/pc | 46 |
| Lafayette, LA | 94/78/t | 50 |
| Lakeland, FL | 87/76/t | 75 |
| ● Lansing, MI | 88/67/t | 75 |
| Las Cruces, NM | 105/74/t | 46 |
| Lebanon, PA | 88/63/pc | 52 |
| ● Leesburg, FL | 86/76/t | 75 |
| Levittown, PA | 88/68/pc | 60 |
| ● Lincoln, IL | 75/68/r | 75 |
| Louisville, KY | 88/71/c | 75 |
| ● Lubbock, TX | 102/74/t | 75 |
| ● Manitowoc, WI | 80/66/r | 75 |
| Mansfield, OH | 85/68/s | 58 |
| Marshall, NC | 84/62/s | 55 |
| ● Marshfield, WI | 75/63/r | 75 |
| Massillon, OH | 87/67/s | 75 |
| McLean, VA | 89/69/s | 50 |
| ● Melbourne, FL | 89/74/t | 75 |
| ● Memphis, TN | 92/79/t | 66 |
| Middletown, NY | 83/60/pc | 43 |
| Milford, MA | 79/61/pc | 25 |
| ● Milwaukee, WI | 80/67/r | 75 |
| ● Monroe, MI | 89/72/pc | 75 |
| ● Monroe, LA | 97/78/t | 58 |
| ● Montgomery, AL | 93/75/t | 42 |
| Muncie, IN | 85/68/pc | 46 |
| Murfreesboro, TN | 89/72/pc | 54 |
| Naples, FL | 91/80/t | 75 |
| Nashville, TN | 91/75/pc | 54 |
| Neptune, NJ | 81/70/pc | 55 |
| New Bedford, MA | 78/64/sh | 25 |
| New Bern, NC | 89/70/pc | 55 |
| New Philadelphia, OH | 86/65/s | 75 |
| Newark, OH | 86/66/s | 64 |
| Newton, NJ | 84/60/pc | 45 |
| New York, NY | 84/70/pc | 60 |
| Norwich, CT | 80/62/sh | 71 |
| ● Ocala, FL | 90/75/t | 75 |
| Oklahoma City, OK | 102/70/t | 60 |
| Opelousas, LA | 93/77/t | 50 |
| ● Oshkosh, WI | 79/65/r | 75 |
| Palm Beach, FL | 92/79/t | 25 |
| Palm Springs, CA | 116/88/s | 108 |
| ● Panama City, FL | 89/78/t | 75 |
| ● Pekin, IL | 75/69/r | 75 |
| ● Pensacola, FL | 91/79/t | 75 |
| ● Peoria, IL | 74/69/r | 75 |
| Petersburg, VA | 90/65/s | 51 |
| Phoenix, AZ | 115/92/s | 100 |
| ● Port Huron, MI | 88/66/pc | 49 |
| Portsmouth, NH | 81/64/sh | 25 |
| Poughkeepsie, NY | 82/59/pc | 43 |
| Providence, RI | 80/66/sh | 50 |
| Pueblo, CO | 93/61/t | 75 |
| Quincy, MA | 78/64/pc | 25 |
| Redding, CA | 104/68/s | 58 |
| Reno, NV | 101/63/s | 75 |
| Ravenna, OH | 85/66/s | 75 |
| Richmond, IN | 86/65/c | 56 |
| Rochester, NY | 84/63/pc | 45 |
| ● Rockford, IL | 76/66/r | 75 |
| Ruidoso, NM | 91/60/t | 53 |
| Salem, OR | 89/56/s | 25 |
| Salina, KS | 91/66/pc | 30 |
| Salinas, CA | 73/55/pc | 25 |
| Salisbury, MD | 86/67/c | 67 |
| ● San Angelo, TX | 101/72/s | 36 |
| Sarasota, FL | 89/79/t | 75 |
| Savannah, GA | 94/76/s | 66 |
| ● Sheboygan, WI | 80/66/r | 75 |
| Shelby, NC | 88/67/s | 55 |
| Sherman, TX | 104/77/s | 43 |
| ● Shreveport, LA | 99/79/t | 58 |
| Silver City, NM | 99/69/t | 52 |
| Sioux Falls, SD | 74/61/t | 26 |
| Somerset, PA | 81/59/s | 60 |
| Somerville, NJ | 88/64/pc | 50 |
| ● South Bend, IN | 83/68/t | 75 |
| Spartanburg, SC | 89/70/s | 58 |
| ● Springfield, IL | 76/69/t | 75 |
| Springfield, MO | 93/66/t | 38 |
| ● St. Augustine, FL | 90/76/t | 75 |
| St. Cloud, MN | 76/61/r | 56 |
| St. George, UT | 107/78/s | 75 |
| Staunton, VA | 85/60/s | 41 |
| ● Stevens Point, WI | 78/64/r | 75 |
| Stockton, CA | 100/60/s | 47 |
| Stroudsburg, PA | 86/61/pc | 45 |
| Stuart, FL | 90/75/t | 25 |
| ● Sturgis, MI | 83/68/pc | 75 |
| ● Tallahassee, FL | 91/75/t | 75 |
| Thibodaux, LA | 93/77/t | 53 |
| Topeka, KS | 87/66/pc | 20 |
| Tuscaloosa, AL | 92/76/t | 87 |
| Utica, NY | 83/58/pc | 29 |
| Ventura, CA | 74/61/pc | 44 |
| Victorville, CA | 107/69/s | 112 |
| Vineland, NJ | 85/65/pc | 60 |
| Visalia, CA | 104/65/s | 61 |
| Washington, DC | 90/72/s | 50 |
| Watertown, SD | 77/58/t | 38 |
| ● Wausau, WI | 78/64/r | 75 |
| Waynesboro, PA | 87/65/pc | 43 |
| White Plains, NY | 82/66/pc | 84 |
| Wichita Falls, TX | 106/76/t | 60 |
| Wilmington, DE | 87/68/s | 67 |
| Wilmington, NC | 90/71/s | 55 |
| ● Wisconsin Rapids, WI | 77/63/r | 75 |
| Wooster, OH | 84/65/s | 75 |
| Worcester, MA | 77/63/pc | 25 |
| York, PA | 88/65/s | 52 |

**Air Quality Index:** 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

## INTERNATIONAL CITIES

| | Friday High/low/W | Saturday High/low/W |
|---|---|---|
| Acapulco | 95/77/pc | 94/78/t |
| ● Addis Ababa | 71/55/sh | 66/55/sh |
| Algiers | 94/73/s | 94/73/s |
| Amman | 98/75/s | 102/77/s |
| Amsterdam | 75/55/sh | 74/56/s |
| Ankara | 85/58/s | 87/63/s |
| Asuncion | 93/75/s | 86/64/r |
| Athens | 91/76/s | 89/75/s |
| Auckland | 59/45/sh | 58/38/sh |
| Baghdad | 120/91/s | 120/96/s |
| ● Bangkok | 87/79/r | 92/79/r |
| Beijing | 92/80/sh | 93/79/t |
| Beirut | 90/78/s | 91/81/s |
| Belgrade | 98/71/s | 98/70/s |
| Berlin | 88/66/pc | 76/55/sh |
| Bogota | 68/50/sh | 67/46/r |
| Brussels | 81/56/pc | 79/55/c |
| Bucharest | 91/62/s | 93/63/s |
| Budapest | 101/66/s | 102/70/s |
| ● Buenos Aires | 69/60/r | 65/52/t |
| Cairo | 99/78/pc | 102/79/pc |
| Cape Town | 74/43/pc | 79/44/s |
| ● Caracas | 90/77/r | 90/77/r |
| Casablanca | 98/71/pc | 102/69/s |
| ● Colombo | 85/80/r | 86/77/r |
| Copenhagen | 72/60/pc | 72/56/pc |
| Damascus | 104/68/s | 108/71/s |
| Dublin | 67/48/pc | 70/49/pc |
| ● Geneva | 86/64/t | 89/64/t |
| Guatemala City | 82/64/t | 82/62/pc |
| ● Hanoi | 87/78/r | 89/78/r |
| Harare | 75/44/pc | 72/40/pc |
| Havana | 94/75/t | 93/73/pc |
| ● Helsinki | 71/61/t | 69/58/pc |
| ● Hong Kong | 85/79/t | 84/78/t |
| ● Jakarta | 92/77/t | 91/77/t |
| Jerusalem | 91/73/s | 93/75/s |
| Johannesburg | 63/37/s | 64/40/pc |
| Kabul | 89/68/pc | 91/69/pc |
| ● Khartoum | 104/85/s | 103/78/t |
| Kyiv | 83/63/s | 88/64/s |
| Kingston | 93/80/s | 91/81/pc |
| La Paz | 60/27/sh | 59/26/s |
| Lagos | 85/76/t | 83/76/t |
| Lima | 77/70/pc | 76/68/pc |
| Lisbon | 85/66/s | 89/66/s |
| London | 79/56/s | 79/58/pc |
| Madrid | 100/66/s | 102/67/s |
| ● Manila | 94/78/t | 93/79/t |
| Mexico City | 78/55/r | 78/56/r |
| Milan | 103/75/s | 101/74/s |
| Mombasa | 85/70/pc | 84/68/sh |
| ● Montevideo | 72/58/r | 63/47/r |
| Montreal | 81/66/pc | 82/70/t |
| Moscow | 77/57/s | 82/64/pc |
| Nairobi | 76/57/r | 77/56/c |
| New Delhi | 92/79/r | 91/80/t |
| Panama City | 91/77/t | 90/76/t |
| Paris | 85/63/pc | 83/60/t |
| Port-au-Prince | 102/74/t | 98/72/r |
| Rio de Janeiro | 76/66/sh | 78/65/s |
| Riyadh | 112/88/s | 114/90/s |
| Rome | 95/71/s | 94/72/s |
| San Jose | 87/71/t | 84/70/r |
| ● San Salvador | 94/70/t | 92/69/pc |
| ● Santiago | 56/36/r | 56/47/pc |
| Sao Paulo | 75/56/s | 82/60/pc |
| Sarajevo | 94/62/s | 97/61/s |
| Shanghai | 101/82/t | 102/82/t |
| Singapore | 92/80/t | 90/80/pc |
| Stockholm | 73/52/pc | 70/51/s |
| Sydney | 63/46/s | 63/46/pc |
| Taipei | 94/80/pc | 96/81/sh |
| Tegucigalpa | 88/66/t | 88/64/t |
| Tehran | 95/76/s | 96/78/s |
| ● Tokyo | 94/81/sh | 94/82/t |
| Toronto | 86/69/pc | 80/66/t |
| Tunis | 97/74/s | 100/75/s |
| Vancouver | 75/61/pc | 71/54/sh |
| Vienna | 102/74/s | 97/70/pc |
| Warsaw | 98/70/t | 88/66/t |
| Yerevan | 91/68/s | 92/71/s |
| Zagreb | 100/66/s | 101/69/s |
| ● Zurich | 94/62/t | 87/63/t |

● Denotes possible travel delays Friday

**Weather(W)**: **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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FINANCIAL MARKETS

# Indexes lifted by soaring Microsoft

**Noel Randewich**
REUTERS

Wall Street ended sharply higher on July 30, with chip stocks jumping and Microsoft logging its biggest daily percentage gain in 18 years after the technology giant gave a stellar forecast that eased fears about massive spending on AI infrastructure.

Microsoft jumped over 15%, boosting its stock market value by $450 billion, the greatest-ever single-day increase for a company on Wall Street. The tech heavyweight forecast quarterly sales and cloud growth above expectations. It also reported capital expenditures below estimates and said it expects to keep generating cash through its fiscal 2027 that has just begun.

This year, investors have been spooked by heavy spending on AI at big technology firms. Negative cash-flow reports from Alphabet and Tesla last week sparked a bout of selling in AI-linked stocks, with chip stocks also under pressure as investors questioned high valuations.

Meta Platforms tumbled after the social media heavyweight reported a 91% drop in second-quarter free cash flow, indicating the financial strain of its costly AI build-out.

"These are true battleground stocks. Investors can't make up their minds whether the ROI on the massive ... spending is going to be worthwhile or not," said Jed Ellerbroek, portfolio manager at Argent Capital Management.

"Microsoft delivered yesterday, and maybe Microsoft is going to be able to move itself from the 'battleground' camp to be a 'trusted AI winner' stock," Ellerbroek said.

The PHLX chip index surged 8.2%, with Micron Technology jumping 18%, Sandisk soaring 26% and Advanced Micro Devices up 13%.

Amazon rose 3.9% and Apple dipped 1.4%, with both companies set to report their results after the market's close.

Amazon's stock has underperformed the broader market this year due to concerns about heavy spending on AI. Apple, which has not spent heavily on AI, recently overtook Nvidia to become the world's most valuable company, with a market value of about $4.9 trillion.

The S&P 500 climbed 1.66% to end the session at 7,437.63 points. The Nasdaq gained 2.78% to 25,122.18 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.19% to 52,208.06 points. Seven of the 11 S&P 500 sector indexes rose, led by technology, up 5.2%, followed by a 1.6% gain in consumer discretionary.

On July 29, U.S. stocks closed sharply lower after the Federal Reserve left interest rates unchanged, with mixed messages from new Fed Chair Kevin Warsh leaving traders confused about the path of borrowing costs.

Bond markets remained on edge, with the yield on the 30-year Treasury bond surging to its highest level in 19 years. Traders are now only pricing in a 59% chance for a rate hike at the Fed's September meeting, according to CME's FedWatch, down from 82% a week ago.

U.S. economic growth slowed in the second quarter as the trade deficit widened. The economy grew at a 1.5% rate, slower than estimates of 2.1% growth, data showed. A separate reading also showed U.S. inflation slowed in June.

Qualcomm fell 2.6% after the chipmaker forecast fourth-quarter profit below estimates and said revenue from Apple products would decline faster than expected.

Fair Isaac slumped 17%. Even though the credit-scoring giant lifted its annual profit and revenue forecasts, they remained below analysts' estimates.

Starbucks rose 1.6% after the world's largest coffee chain raised its annual sales and profit forecasts.

Analysts on average expect S&P 500 aggregate second-quarter earnings to jump 40% from a year ago, according to LSEG I/B/E/S.

Across the U.S. stock market, advancing stocks outnumbered falling ones by a 2.2-to-1 ratio. Volume on U.S. exchanges was relatively heavy, with 18 billion shares traded, compared to an average of 17.2 billion shares over the previous 20 sessions.

## Oil prices

Brent futures settled down $1.71, or 1.88%, at $89.03 a barrel on July 30. West Texas Intermediate crude futures settled down 87 cents, or 1.03%, at $83.59.

# ABC: FCC seeks to intimidate network over news coverage

**David Shepardson**
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Walt Disney-owned ABC said on July 30 that the Federal Communications Commission's threat to revoke the network's broadcast licenses is part of an unprecedented campaign of intimidation over broadcast content the Trump administration dislikes.

ABC said that the Trump administration agency's nearly unprecedented decision to order an early license review of the eight Disney-owned ABC stations is a warning from the government to other media companies.

"The retaliation against ABC is a signal to every media company in the country: accommodate the administration's view of what news coverage should look like or pay the price," ABC said in a filing, adding that the agency's objective is "a media industry too fearful of official reprisal to report the news freely."

FCC Chair Brendan Carr, who did not immediately comment July 30, ordered the reviews in April, even though the stations' license renewals were not scheduled to be considered until starting in October 2028.

The FCC had not ordered an early review in more than 50 years before April.

Carr could decide to take action after a final comment deadline on Aug. 5.

The reviews were ordered a day after President Donald Trump urged ABC to fire late-night host Jimmy Kimmel.

ABC said over 150,000 comments have been filed and over 95% support the stations. Numerous local officials and groups in the eight states have filed in support of the stations.

"From its earliest days, this administration has made clear its intent to punish ABC for its news coverage and to create a chilling effect on ABC and others," ABC said.

The FCC said the move stemmed from a yearlong investigation into whether Disney's diversity policies amounted to unlawful discrimination, an allegation the company denies. Disney did not immediately comment on July 30.

Broadcast stations need FCC licenses to use public airwaves. While license revocations are exceptionally rare, critics say the prospect of losing a license can pressure broadcasters and raise concerns about government interference in editorial and programming decisions. Networks have broad First Amendment rights to make programming decisions.

Carr opened the investigation into Disney's diversity practices in March 2025, and said Disney submitted documents he viewed as insufficient.

Trump has repeatedly urged broadcasters to drop comedy or news programs he dislikes or which have been critical, pressing regulators to revoke licenses of broadcasters he says are unfair.

Trump demanded in November that the FCC revoke ABC licenses after he criticized an ABC News correspondent for asking Saudi Arabia's crown prince about the 2018 killing of a Washington Post columnist, in a question he dubbed "insubordinate."

The FCC is also investigating ABC daytime talk show "The View," which discusses U.S. politics, after saying it may be subject to federal rules requiring broadcasters to provide equal opportunities to political candidates.

# Father of Georgia school shooter sentenced to 15 years in prison

**Julia Harte**
REUTERS

A man who gave his troubled son the rifle he used to kill four people at a Georgia high school was sentenced on July 30 to 15 years in prison, the culmination of the state's first case in which a parent was convicted of second-degree murder for a mass shooting committed by his child.

Colt Gray, 16, was sentenced to life in prison without parole on July 28 for the 2024 school shooting by a Barrow County Superior Court judge. Two days later, the same judge sentenced his 55-year-old father, Colin Gray, to far less than the 80 years prosecutors had requested.

Judge Nicholas Primm noted that none of the charges underlying Colin Gray's conviction entailed mandatory prison time while acknowledging the "immeasurable heartache" his negligence had caused.

"The loss here is profound," Primm said, following tearful testimony by several relatives of those killed in the shooting. "But I still have to distinguish your acts from the malignant heart and the acts that Colt Gray committed."

**Colin Gray is the latest U.S. parent to be prosecuted for a mass shooting committed by a child.**
BRYNN ANDERSON/POOL VIA REUTERS FILE

Colin Gray is the latest U.S. parent to be prosecuted for a mass shooting committed by a child – an emerging legal strategy employed by prosecutors in a bid to tackle the epidemic of gun violence in U.S. schools.

Months before Colt Gray's shooting, the parents of a Michigan teenager who shot and killed four classmates were sentenced to 10 to 15 years in prison after being convicted for manslaughter. In that case, a jury found Jennifer and James Crumbley guilty of not securing guns in their home and of ignoring signs that their son was mentally disturbed.

Colin Gray's defense attorney Brian Hobbs on July 30 urged the judge to give his client a sentence of 10 years in prison and 10 years of probation, arguing the Michigan parents had more advance notice of their son's problems and noting that Gray was the first parent in the state to be charged for a child's mass shooting.

"We would ask the court not to make Georgia the national outlier in this first case of its kind, against a defendant whose warnings came with less and whose efforts were more," Hobbs said.

Barrow County District Attorney Brad Smith rejected Hobbs's claim that Colin Gray had little warning of his son's violent plans, showing the judge a replica of a bedroom wall on which Colt had created a shrine to the gunman behind the 2018 mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida.

The risk was "staring him in the face every day," Smith told the judge.

# Blanche

Continued from Page 1NN

Generals of All Time," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "I have no objection to temporarily withdrawing Todd's name, if they do not do the right thing, and putting him back after Cornyn and Tillis are out of office."

Cornyn and Tillis are due to end their terms in the Senate in early January. Blanche, Trump's former personal lawyer, was named acting attorney general after the president fired Pam Bondi in April.

The stalemate over Blanche's nomination is the latest sign of a growing rupture between Trump and some Senate Republicans. The party faces the possibility of losing its 53-47 seat majority in the Senate in November's midterm elections, and some Republicans in the chamber have shown an increasing willingness to resist the president.

Republicans have turned away efforts to fund Trump's ballroom on the site of the demolished White House East Wing, and resisted his calls to change Senate rules to pass his partisan voter ID bill, the SAVE America Act.

Cornyn, who lost his primary reelection bid in Texas after Trump endorsed challenger Ken Paxton, told reporters that negotiations were likely over until next week.

Tillis, who represents North Carolina, announced his retirement last year after clashing with Trump over Medicaid cuts in the president's sweeping tax cut and spending bill.

Cornyn and Tillis have been the public faces of opposition to Trump. But Cornyn said on social media that other senators share their concerns.

Blanche has also met with Sen. John Curtis, R-Utah, to try to shore up support.

**Todd Blanche likely does not need to be confirmed to effectively serve as President Donald Trump's attorney general for the rest of his term.**
KEVIN DIETSCH/ GETTY IMAGES

Blanche likely does not need to be confirmed to effectively serve as Trump's attorney general for the rest of his term as president. Acting officers can serve in their roles "for the period that the nomination is pending in the Senate," so long as their nomination is not formally rejected or withdrawn.

And as deputy attorney general, he can exercise all duties of the attorney general's office when that office is vacant. That means that so long as he is in that position, and there is no one above him, Blanche can likely run the Justice Department indefinitely.

### Proposed fund in dispute

The "anti-weaponization" fund, crafted as part of a legal settlement between Trump and the Justice Department to resolve his $10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over allegedly mishandling his tax records, was put on hold amid opposition from Republicans in Congress.

The fund could benefit Trump allies who have said they were unfairly targeted in the past by the federal government for their involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Trump last year gave clemency to his supporters who were prosecuted for their roles in the Jan. 6 riot.

Cornyn told reporters earlier on July 30 that he was still waiting for the Justice Department to formalize assurances that it would not implement the fund.

"I don't know whether they think they can wait us out or we'll cave. But I can assure you we won't," Cornyn told reporters.

Cornyn and Tillis also have objections to a deal with the IRS that would prevent tax audits of Trump and his associates.

Trump ousted Bondi over his frustrations with her performance, especially over the release of files relating to the late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Trump also felt Bondi was not moving quickly enough to prosecute critics and adversaries whom he wanted to face criminal charges, according to sources.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Trump says peace talks have led to Hamas disarmament deal

CAIRO – President Donald Trump on July 30 said Cairo talks between mediators and Hamas leaders have led to a "HISTORIC agreement for the COMPLETE DISARMAMENT of Hamas" in what he described as structured phases.

Sources close to the talks told Reuters earlier on July 30 that progress was made but it is uncertain if the agreement will hold, as an Israeli official had said the proposed terms were not satisfactory.

"This agreement is a critical step towards Gaza finally being governed by a new Palestinian government that will work closely with the Board of Peace to help the Palestinian people," Trump said in a social media post.

"At the same time, Israel will have the security it deserves, with Gaza no longer used as a base for terror attacks."

The Israeli Embassy in Washington and Hamas did not immediately respond to requests for comment about Trump's post. A Hamas official and a diplomat close to the Cairo talks said the progress would be tested by Israel's response and whether this allowed a broad accord to be reached.

### Senate panel votes to advance Trump's CDC pick Schwartz

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate health committee voted on July 30 to advance the nomination of President Donald Trump's pick for CDC director, Dr. Erica Schwartz, handing his administration a rare win after repeated failed attempts to fill top health posts.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee sent Schwartz, Trump's third pick to run the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to the full Senate on a 13-10 vote, with Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine the lone member to cross party lines.

Trump withdrew his first CDC pick, Dave Weldon, and his first surgeon general nominee, Janette Nesheiwat, in 2025 before either reached a hearing. He withdrew a second surgeon general pick, Casey Means, in April.

If confirmed, Schwartz would be the first permanent CDC director since Susan Monarez, Trump's second pick, was fired by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. last year after less than a month over a clash on vaccine policy.

Schwartz is set to inherit an agency confronting the worst U.S. measles resurgence in three decades, driven by falling childhood immunization rates; an Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda; and the largest U.S. foodborne illness outbreak in recent years.

### U.S. cyber agency warns hackers are targeting water systems

The U.S. government's civilian cyber defense agency on July 30 warned of a significant increase in hackers targeting technology used to maintain and control water and wastewater systems, and said operators of such systems should remove them from the internet as soon as possible.

The warning comes two days after Minnesota's state IT agency said more than 30 community water systems in the state were targeted in a "coordinated cyberattack" on July 26 and 27.

U.S. officials and investigators reviewing the matter say it is likely Iranian-linked hackers are behind the Minnesota attacks, the New York Times reported July 30. Representatives for the Iranian government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

State and local officials have said the Minnesota attacks did not threaten water safety, but that in some cases certain systems were taken offline and had to be reset manually.

### Migrants pour into Spain's Ceuta from Morocco as military called in

CEUTA, Spain – The Spanish government deployed military units to reinforce police in the North African enclave of Ceuta after migrants in Morocco broke through fences around the city on July 30, overwhelming the Guardia Civil police force.

State television TVE reported that 2,000 to 3,000 people had crossed. Reuters was not immediately able to confirm that report.

Video footage showed hundreds of migrants swimming or floating on inner tubes from the Moroccan side, and others breaking through a gate on land and running into the city.

Nine corpses were found on July 30, local authorities said, adding to a toll of 60 migrants who have died attempting to cross into Ceuta in recent months. The government said 200 specialized police officers and 60 troops had arrived from the Spanish mainland to reinforce the enclave's regular forces.

*Reuters*

# Brazil's rift with U.S. deepens

## Withholds approval of Trump ambassador pick

**Gram Slattery and Lisandra Paraguassu**
REUTERS

BRASILIA, Brazil – The Brazilian government has for weeks withheld the formal diplomatic approval needed for the next U.S. ambassador to take up his post, angering U.S. officials and deepening a rift between the Western Hemisphere's two largest democracies.

The dispute could leave Washington without an ambassador in Brasilia ahead of Brazil's October election, adding to tensions that have affected trade flows and resulted in accusations of interference in domestic affairs.

Daniel Perez, a Florida state representative and close ally of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, was nominated by President Donald Trump on June 1. The nomination occurred before the United States sought Brazil's approval, a common diplomatic step known as "agrément," said four people familiar with the matter.

Officials in Brasilia viewed that omission as a disrespectful breach of protocol, according to two officials who requested anonymity to describe private diplomatic conversations. Perez's nomination is awaiting a full Senate vote after passing committee last week, though he will not be able to take up the post until Brazil approves.

In recent days, some Trump officials have grown increasingly exasperated about what they interpret as Brazil's slow-walking, according to two of the sources. One of the people added, without elaborating, that the administration may take punitive action against Brazil as soon as July 31 if the matter is not resolved.

The administration of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a leftist, has long had a tense relationship with Rubio's State Department due to what it sees as efforts to influence Latin American politics in favor of conservatives.

The Trump administration, conversely, has accused the Brazilian government of at times censoring conservatives or tilting the scales against them in judicial proceedings.

Asked about Brazil's delay in granting agrément for Perez, a State Department spokesperson said: "President Trump has the right to determine who represents the American people and interests around the world. President Trump is assembling an America First diplomatic A-team across his administration, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. We reject any effort by foreign countries to interfere in our domestic processes."

Brazil is investigating Perez in keeping with standard procedure, two Brazilian officials said. One of them added that agrément will probably not be granted before Brazil's election Oct. 4.

Brazil's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it would not comment on the matter "as the process is covered by the principle of confidentiality established in the Vienna Convention."

Perez's Florida House office did not respond to an email.

National sovereignty has become a key rallying cry for Lula, as he seeks his fourth non-consecutive term in October's election. His main opponent is Sen. Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, who has sought to portray Trump as a key ally.

In June, the State Department designated two Brazilian organized crime groups as terrorist organizations, despite opposition from the Brazilian government. Washington imposed a 25% tariff this month on several Brazilian products, citing what it described as unfair trade practices. Last week, it announced an additional 12.5% levy linked to concerns over forced labor.

At an event on July 29, Lula said Brazil had denied visa requests for two Trump administration officials who, according to him, planned to travel to the country "to meddle in Brazil's election," confirming a Reuters report from last week. A U.S. State Department spokesperson at the time rejected any suggestion of a "ploy" to undermine Brazil's elections.

# Suez

Continued from Page 1NN

said George Morris of energy analytics firm Vortexa, attributing this to the Houthi threats.

Crude is still flowing south through Bab el-Mandeb, though at around half the volume at the start of the month, the Kpler data showed, with around 43% of Yanbu loadings heading south compared to 81% in June.

Although many tankers are avoiding Bab el-Mandeb altogether, some, including Chinese vessels, have permission from the Houthis to pass. An increasing number of tankers are also traveling with their trackers turned off, Morris said.

And the Damietta attack does not necessarily imply any immediate threat to the canal, said Aly Blakeway, head of Atlantic LNG at S&P Global Energy. "The market isn't pricing in disruption to the canal at this stage," Blakeway said.

The Suez Canal Authority did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

**Ships are seen docked at Egypt's port of Damietta on July 30. No party has claimed responsibility for the July 29 attack.**
PROVIDED BY DAMIETTA PORT AUTHORITY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

### Long, uncertain route to market

Iran has threatened to stop all Middle Eastern energy exports, saying that no oil should flow from the region while the United States blockades Iranian tankers.

The Houthis announced a blockade on all Saudi shipping – a category that may include any vessels seeking to carry crude to the Mediterranean after loading at Yanbu.

They have also both demonstrated that the canal zone is within the range of their drones and rockets, having repeatedly fired at Israel, though the long distances involved give more opportunity to bring down projectiles.

That fact alone may now raise insurance prices, said Martin Senior, head of LNG pricing at Argus.

"Insurers may also command higher Additional War Risk Premiums for Suez in light of the [Egypt] attack, given the increased risk to shipping and energy infrastructure in the region," he said, while noting that Iran had not made any specific threats.

Shipping companies were already reevaluating their security arrangements for ships around Egypt's Mediterranean ports near the Suez Canal, a maritime security source said.

In Egypt, the attack is not necessarily seen as evidence that Suez is at risk. "The canal is heavily guarded and secured around the clock," said Wael Kaddour, a former Suez Canal Authority board member.

Even before the attack, Middle Eastern oil was taking an increasingly long, complex and expensive route to reach global markets.

"Yanbu cargoes accounted for around 15% of Asia's seaborne crude/condensate imports in June, so sustained disruption has meaningful implications for Asian refiners – routing via Suez instead of Bab el-Mandeb more than doubles voyage times to Northeast Asia, delaying arrivals by roughly a month," Morris said.

Moving large volumes through Suez is awkward for other reasons too. Very Large Crude Carriers, or VLCCs, have too deep a draft to traverse Suez fully laden and have to offload some crude through the Sumed pipeline before reloading it in the Mediterranean.

Still, more crude could flow through Suez and Sumed. Last week 1.4 million barrels a day of oil were lifted from Sidi Kerir, compared to its historical weekly peak of 2.1 million barrels per day and Sumed's capacity of 2.5 million barrels.

Morris said around 10 VLCCs were likely to load at Sidi Kerir in the coming weeks, mainly serving Asian refiners.

That capacity – along with the uncertain outlook for Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb traffic – underscores why Suez could be so important a route in the current crisis and why any threat to its operations could hit so hard.

"An attack anywhere within the canal region would substantially increase war risk insurance premiums. It would also substantially change the security assessment of the region," said Corey Ranslem, CEO of maritime security group Dryad Global.

"Disruption to the Suez Canal would have an almost immediate impact on prices. The inflationary pressure from longer voyages, higher freight, would be translated to the consumers almost immediately," said Matthew Wright, principal freight analyst at Kpler.

# Fauci

Continued from Page 1NN

questions relevant to a Senate inquiry.

Fauci will likely not be able to argue that his refusal was based on legal advice. Judges barred Trump advisers Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro from raising that defense when they faced criminal contempt charges for refusing to cooperate with the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Both Bannon and Navarro were convicted and imprisoned.

### What defenses could Fauci raise?

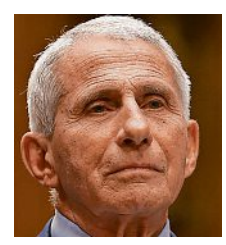
A criminal case against Fauci faces several obstacles, legal experts say.

If the Senate votes to support the referral and the Justice Department decides to seek charges, an indictment would still need to be approved by a grand jury. Grand jury panels in Washington have refused to sign off on charges in multiple politically charged cases during the Trump administration.

If Fauci is indicted, his lawyers will likely argue that he cannot face contempt charges for exercising his right under the U.S. Constitution's Fifth Amendment to refuse to answer questions that could expose him to criminal liability.

Then-President Joe Biden pardoned Fauci for any offenses he may have committed from 2014 until January 2025.

The pardon does not cover any conduct that has happened since Biden left office, but it could complicate Fauci's ability to rely on the Fifth Amendment defense.



**Fauci**

**Paul**

Courts have not decided whether a witness who has received a presidential pardon can refuse to answer questions before Congress about the conduct covered by that pardon, legal experts say. That question would likely need to be resolved before Fauci could face trial.